

THE
WHITE PLUME
OF
NAVARRE

BY RUSSELL GORDON CARTER



ILLUSTRATED BY BEATRICE STEVENS
— A YOLLAND BOOK —

Follow the White Plume
upon my Casque. You will
find it in the road to
Victory and Honour.





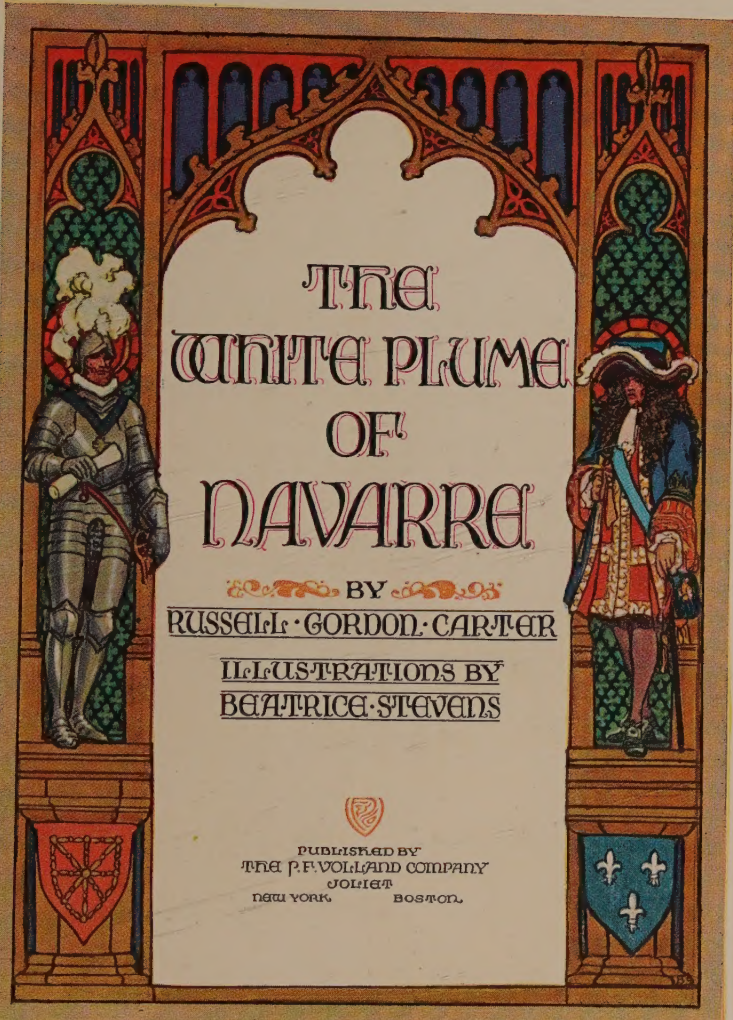
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Someone was approaching along the rampart.

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BY
RUSSELL · GORDON · CARTER

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BEATRICE · STEVENS



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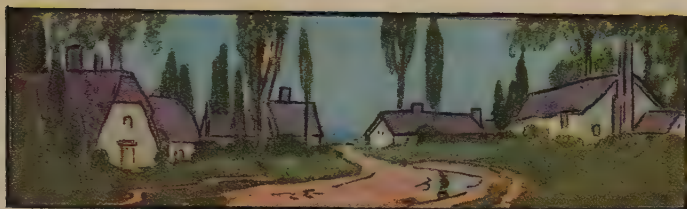
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"If in the turmoil of the battle you lose sight of your banner, follow the white plume upon my casque. You will find it in the road to victory and honor."

*Henry of Navarre to his soldiers
before the Battle of Ivry.*

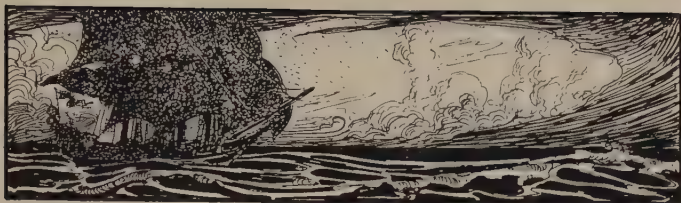
To
Brigadier General Frank R. McCoy, U. S. A.
on whose staff the author had the honor
of serving in France during
the World War
This book is dedicated with
Esteem and Affection



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Chapter One

UP THE WATERFALL

THE little village of Bellefontaine, in the wide-spreading province of Languedoc, lay in a quiet, fertile valley through which a narrow, slow-moving river wound its way southward toward the sea. A cobble-stoned street, the only street in the village, ran roughly east and west, crossing an old moss-grown stone bridge and continuing on as a road that curved and lost itself in the fields beyond the river.

Late one evening in March, in the year 1685,—a cool, misty, moon-flooded evening—a thirteen-year-old boy by the name of Philip La Fere crossed the bridge with swinging strides and made his way to the third house on the right of the street. With his hand on the door latch, he softly hummed part of a psalm that those who, like himself, were of the Huguenot faith often sang in the fields on



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working days and in the temples on Sundays; and the thought occurred to him, as he paused there, that never before had his native village seemed so quiet, so peaceful.

Yet it was not a time of peace. All France was torn with religious hatreds; and even at the moment when Philip closed the door behind him, the king, Louis XIV, amid the artificial luxury of Versailles, flattered by favorites and cajoled by ambitious schemers, was meditating an act of violence that was to rid his kingdom of Huguenots and carry terror to all parts of his realm.

As Philip entered the main room of the house, he could hear the voices of his mother and father and his sister, Germaine, in low conversation on the floor above. A crackling fire of willow twigs was burning in the broad fireplace, the yellow flames leaping and curling upward round the blackened pot that hung from its heavy chain. He was tired from a day in the open, and the fire was friendly and inviting. Crossing the grass-strewn floor, he stretched out in front of the hearth and pillowed his head on his arm. Before many



minutes his eyes closed and he was breathing regularly.

The sound of a familiar voice wakened him. "It is becoming harder each day for those of our faith!" exclaimed old Jean La Fere with unwonted bitterness. "The King is resolved to stamp it out. He will not be content until there are no longer any Huguenots left in France!"

Philip blinked his eyes and raised his head. From the direction of the stairway came the voice of his father again: "If we of Bellefontaine have not yet suffered at the hands of his clergy, it is only because our village is unimportant and remote. But I am fearful of the future. There is talk now of quartering soldiers upon us to bend us forcibly to a faith that we cannot in our hearts accept."

"But surely, Jean," replied his wife anxiously, "the proclamation of the good Henry of Navarre, made at Nantes, is still a law of our land, granting us freedom to worship—"

"Reflect," said Jean La Fere sharply, "reflect on what the King already has done to the proclamation of his worthy grandsire.



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Year by year the Edict of Nantes has been shorn away until now little remains of it save the seal and signature of Henry IV. Reflect on what has been done in Poitou and in other provinces. I repeat I am fearful of the future."

Philip sat up and coughed slightly, but the sound of his voice was drowned by the voice of his sister. "Let the King send his dragoons!" she exclaimed. "I for one do not fear them—"

"Silence, Germaine!" said the father. "You do not know the King's dragoons when they wish to be ugly. Better would it be to have wolves in the house than they!"

The stairs creaked; a patch of yellow light moved across the floor, and presently Jean La Fere entered the room, taper in hand, followed by his wife and his daughter.

"Ah, Philip," observed the father pleasantly, "you must have entered like a mouse. I did not hear you."

He seated himself on a bench beside the fire, his feet wide apart, his fingers lightly touching above his waist. He was a short, thick-set, ruddy-faced man with curly iron-



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gray hair and whiskers, and a pair of kindly eyes as mild and blue as the skies of Languedoc.

Philip, observing him in the firelight, thought his father looked careworn and anxious. Then the boy's glance moved to his mother; she was seated beside the table, on which the taper was burning—a slender, olive-skinned little woman with dark hair and eyes and a prominent, rather aquiline nose. She had drawn forth her knitting, and presently the long needles were flashing in the golden light. Behind her, at the window, stood Germaine, tall, supple and dark, gazing meditatively off across the black and silver river.

Philip went to bed after a few minutes, but tired though he was, the words of his father kept ringing in his ears: "There is talk now of quartering soldiers upon us. Better would it be to have wolves in the house than they!" He fell asleep at last, and when morning dawned and he rose to dress, the memory of what he had overheard the night before was less vivid, less disquieting, and he decided to say nothing about it to anyone, not even to Germaine.

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Gradually, as the village continued its peaceful way of life, anxiety left him and he ceased to think of it. Spring and summer passed with no unusual event to disturb the valley. Jean La Fere pursued his work of silk weaving. His wife and daughter occupied themselves with the many little tasks about the house; and Philip spent much time in the garden and in the neighboring fields. Then came autumn with cloud-flecked skies, misty mornings and cool evenings.

The twenty-second of October, Philip's fourteenth birthday, proved to be a day of importance, not only for the way it began, but for the way it ended. His father had announced that it was to be a holiday for the boy, and Philip awoke early and began to dress with a feeling of exultation and importance. It was a beautiful morning. The sun was pushing up from behind the hills across the river, sending broad shafts of yellow light into the rising mists and playing like fire on the crinkled roofs of the houses. Birds were singing in the willows near the bridge; a cock was crowing in the street, its call harmonizing



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pleasantly with the clump, clump of wooden shoes on the cobblestones. Far overhead a lark was singing, and it seemed to Philip as if all the gladness he felt was in that song.

After breakfast, fishpole in hand, he set off alone up the river. Noon found him far from Bellefontaine, in a wild, unfrequented country that he had never visited before. In front of him rose a line of rugged mountains thickly clothed in beech and oak, and through a deep, dark cleft came the river, no longer sluggish, but a gurgling thread of water leaping swiftly over smooth ledges and swirling round great boulders. He sat down and ate the lunch that Germaine had prepared for him, all the while gazing into that narrow, dimly lighted cleft. It was a dismal place with its age-old rocks and black-stemmed trees; but its atmosphere of sombre mystery attracted him, and at last he decided to explore it.

Leaving the fish pole on the grass, he entered the cleft. It grew darker as he pushed forward, until at the end of perhaps a quarter of an hour he was struggling upwards over what in spring must have been the bed of a for-



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midable waterfall. Another quarter of an hour of scrambling brought him out upon the edge of a broad, gently sloping clearing, where to his intense surprise he beheld the ruins of a castle. It stood on the far side of the clearing, and through a wide gap in one of the crumbling walls he could see a patch of blue sky. For several minutes he remained motionless, noting the broken, rounded towers, the slate-gray walls pockmarked and discolored by age and storm, the gaping eyeless windows that seemed to stare back at him, the sagging roof, the massive iron-studded door partly opened and festooned with vines and young growth that crept in wild disorder about the lower walls; and he wondered what noble family had once dwelt there and whither they had gone.

He was about to turn back toward the waterfall, when he was startled to see the figure of a man in dark blue emerge from the door. His eyes met those of the boy, and for several seconds the two stood staring at each other; then the stranger moved forward, swaggering slightly, one hand twisting

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his moustache, the other resting on the hilt of a sword that hung almost horizontally from his belt. Philip observed that he was young, perhaps but a year or two older than his sister, that his clothes were rather the worse for wear, and that, although not tall or heavily built, he was undoubtedly a man of considerable strength and activity.

"Well, young sir," were his first words, "what chance brings you to this melancholy place?"

His voice and manner were friendly and reassuring; nevertheless, Philip was confused. "I—I came here by accident," he replied. "I was fishing, but I stopped to climb the waterfall. My name is Philip La Fere, and I live at Bellefontaine."

The stranger put his hand on the boy's shoulder. "Philip," he said gravely, "I like the way those blue eyes of yours meet mine. I like the lift of your chin and the set of your mouth. In short, I like your face; and something seems to tell me 'twas lucky chance led you up the waterfall to my ruined house. You must sup with me. Three days have I eaten



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here alone. That is long enough. I am not a hermit."

He smiled as he spoke the last word and then led the way back to the massive door. Philip followed him wonderingly. The room they entered was high-ceilinged and spacious. Once it had been a magnificent banquet hall, but now all its elegance was gone. The mulioned windows commanding a view of a deep, wild valley to the north were without glass; the carved oak seats beneath them were split and pitted and weather-stained; the walls were cracked and encrusted with dirt. The only articles of furniture were a long oak table and a low bench beside it; those were at one end of the room in front of a massive, sculptured fireplace of gray stone.

The stranger took a packet from the high mantelpiece and, opening it upon the table, disclosed a chunk of meat and part of a cheese. "It grieves me," he said with a slight smile, "that my larder holds no better fare than this. But let us eat and be merry, so far as it is possible in these sorry times."

As Philip sat down upon the bench he had a



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chance to observe the man's face. It was a good face—he was sure of that—frank and open and deeply tanned. The eyes were dark blue, the nose straight and slender, the mouth rather wide with carefully trimmed moustaches; and a thick mass of curly black hair was parted over a broad forehead and fell in ringlets almost to the shoulders.

"You have never been up the waterfall before?" said his host, pushing a slice of meat toward him.

"No—I have never before been so far from our village," replied Philip.

"In that case you probably never have heard of this ruined castle or even so much as the name of its present lord."

As Philip shook his head, the man rose and, smiling in a curious way, swept him a courtly bow. "I am Raoul Adair de Gautier, Marquis de Florac de la Tour de Bosc—at your service," he said.

There was something so theatrical, so mockingly serious about the gesture and the tone of his voice that Philip sat there silent, not knowing what to say. The young man seated



himself again and rested his chin upon his hand.

"'Twas not always thus," he said at last. "There was a time when the de Gautiers were known and feared and respected in Languedoc—and when a courtly bow was not out of place in this hall. Ah, lad, if Henry of Navarre were only alive and on the throne today!"

"You are a Huguenot," said Philip hesitantly and added, "We, too, are of the reformed faith."

"Yes, I somehow read it in your eyes, Philip, but it pleases me to hear you assert it boldly. We de Gautiers gave our best for Navarre—a just and truly great king. France would not be the country of hatreds that it is today were Henry on the throne."

"My father has often said that," replied Philip quickly.

"Ah! Then I have something here that would please your good father." And opening his doublet at the breast, the marquis unclasped a thin steel chain and drew it forth along with a small leather bag that was fastened to it.

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Philip watched him curiously as his strong brown fingers spread the mouth of the bag and delved into it. Drawing out a curved, light gray object, he held it before him above the table and touched it gently with his fingers.

"Why, it is a plume!" exclaimed Philip.

"Yes," replied the noble, "it is the tip end of the white plume that Henry of Navarre wore at the battle of Ivry and on many state occasions." And he passed it to the boy.

Philip could not suppress a feeling of awe as he held the plume before him. Often had he heard his father tell of the brave deeds of Henry IV—how at Ivry he bade his followers keep his white plume always in sight and then plunged into the thick of the battle. And now here in his own fingers was the tip of that very plume!

"'Tis that which has brought me here to this somber ruin," continued the marquis. "That plume is the most treasured relic of the de Gautiers. It lay for years in its leathern case in a secret cavity yonder by the fireplace. I learned of its presence here but a fortnight ago from my dying uncle at Paris—Geoffrey de



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Gautier—and I came at once to get it. Then I lingered, I know not why." His gaze wandered far off; then he resumed in a sad voice, "There is little left of this once formidable castle, and there is little left of the valiant de Gautiers. I am the last of the blood."

He took the plume from Philip and twirled it slowly between his thumb and forefinger. "I value this," he said, "because it is symbolic of the three most noble qualities inherent in Henry of Navarre—courage, tolerance and magnanimity. Believe me, lad, when I say that those qualities are seldom found in one man. Henry of Navarre had many grave faults, but he was as fearless as a lion; he was able to overlook faults in others; and I believe he was never guilty of a petty thought or deed."

The Marquis de Florac replaced the plume in the bag and fastened the chain round his neck. Then with an impulsive movement he stood erect and fixed his clear, dark eyes on those of the boy.

"Philip," he said in a voice that was as stern as it was solemn, "Philip La Fere, I

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have been a soldier, but I cannot fight the battles of so bigoted a king as Louis. I am of the nobility, but I have no money, no retainers, no friends. I am familiar with all the niceties of court life, but I am in disfavor at court." He rested one hand on the boy's shoulder. "Philip La Fere," he repeated, "I said I believed 'twas lucky chance brought you here today. Tell me, lad, what would you do were you in my place?"

Philip moistened his lips under the solemn, unblinking eyes of the noble. "I—I am not sure just what I should do," he replied, "but I think, were I a noble and a Huguenot, I should try to act as the great Henry of Navarre would have acted."

"Well spoken!" cried the marquis. "Though you may know it not, your words are the words of a sage! They touch something within me—and may I bring shame and disgrace upon the name of de Gautier if I do not heed advice so clear and valiant!"

He seated himself again on the bench, and the two continued to eat and talk. At last Philip rose and said he must be on his way.



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The marquis accompanied him to the head of the waterfall and extended his hand in parting.

"Philip," he said, "you and I have too much in common to part without the thought of meeting again. These are troublous times, and they grow worse instead of better. Let not the fact of our different stations in life stand in the way of friendship. When you think of me, think of me not as the Marquis de Florac—nor as a de Gautier. Think of me simply as—" he paused, then with a smile added, "as Adair—a name which, though it represents an impurity in my French blood, somehow pleases me by its sound. Now let me hear you say it."

"Adair," said Philip, smiling.

"Yes, 'tis a fair-sounding name." The fingers of the noble tightened on the boy's hand as he added, "Above all, Philip, come what may in this land which we both love, let us not lose sight of the white plume of Navarre. I hope you will climb the waterfall again very soon. If not, be not astonished if you see me one day in the streets of your native village. As I told you, I am not a her-



'Tis that which has brought me here.



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mit. I have a natural-born love for society—and for hearing the sound of my own voice.”

They parted then, the man moving with his buoyant swagger in the direction of his ruined ancestral castle, the boy stepping cautiously upon the slippery, moss-grown stones of the waterfall.

It would be hard to explain how profoundly the meeting had affected Philip. He had never before seen anyone in the least like the young marquis. There was something about him so picturesque and at the same time so whole-hearted and boyish—quite unlike any noble who had ever set foot in Bellefontaine—that Philip’s imagination was stirred and captivated.

The sun had set by the time he reached Bellefontaine. As he came to the first house—that of the Mauberts—he was surprised to see two soldiers in long yellow cloaks on the doorstep. They took no particular notice of him; but as he turned the corner he saw others in the street ahead, standing about in groups, or lounging in doorways. No villagers were in sight.

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Philip hurried on toward his own house, feeling suddenly rather faint, trying in vain to put aside the anxious thoughts that rose within him. The voice of his father was again in his ears, as on that moon-flooded evening back in March: "There is talk now of quartering soldiers upon us. Better would it be to have wolves in the house than they!"

A tall, heavy-shouldered man in the uniform of an officer was standing in front of the open door of the La Fere house, one hand tapping the hilt of his sword. Philip paused in front of him, and the man regarded him with calm insolence, making no effort to move aside. Philip stepped forward to brush past him, but the man's hand shot out, pushing him backward.

"Not so fast, young whelp!" he exclaimed in a harsh voice. "What is it you want here?"

"I live here," replied Philip.

"Oh, so you are a young heretic, eh? Get you in by the rear then!"

As Philip still hesitated, the officer suddenly drew his sword and brought it down flat-wise toward the boy's head. Philip threw up one

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arm to protect himself, and the blade struck the back of his hand a glancing blow that tore the skin, leaving the hand red and throbbing. At the same instant the officer lurched grotesquely forward, and Germaine La Fere, with eyes blazing and face as white as chalk, darted forth and caught her brother in her arms.





Chapter Two

THE DRAGONADES

PHILIP struggled loose from his sister's arms. "Don't, Germaine!" he protested. "My hand is badly scratched, that is all. Let me have something with which to bind it."

"The coward!" exclaimed the girl, glancing at the officer as she tore a strip from her apron.

He inclined his head with polite deference—for it was an age of well-bred manners, and Nicolas Saint-Marly, King's lieutenant, had spent most of his life at Paris. He moved back to the threshold again and, with one

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hand on the hilt of his sword, which he had sheathed, and the other on his hip, watched the girl while she bound up her brother's hand.

Philip, viewing him as he filled the doorway, was sure he had never before seen so repulsive a man in so fine a garb. His face was the shape of a pear, being narrow at the top and wide at the bottom—a red, flabby caricature of a face with little black eyes necessarily close together, a broad bibulous nose and a pair of long, elegantly waxed red moustaches. His coat and breeches and hose were plum-colored and ornamented with silver and lace trimmings, his boots new and shiny; and on his head, tilted slightly to one side, he wore a wide, flat, plum-colored hat with an abundance of lace that matched the lace on his coat.

"There," said Germaine as she fastened the bandage, "that will stop the blood. Let us go inside."

She stepped toward the door, but the officer made no effort to shift his position. The girl's anger suddenly burst forth afresh.



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"Sir!" she exclaimed in a trembling voice. "Have the courtesy and respect to move aside so we may enter! Are you not satisfied with the result of your cowardly act?"

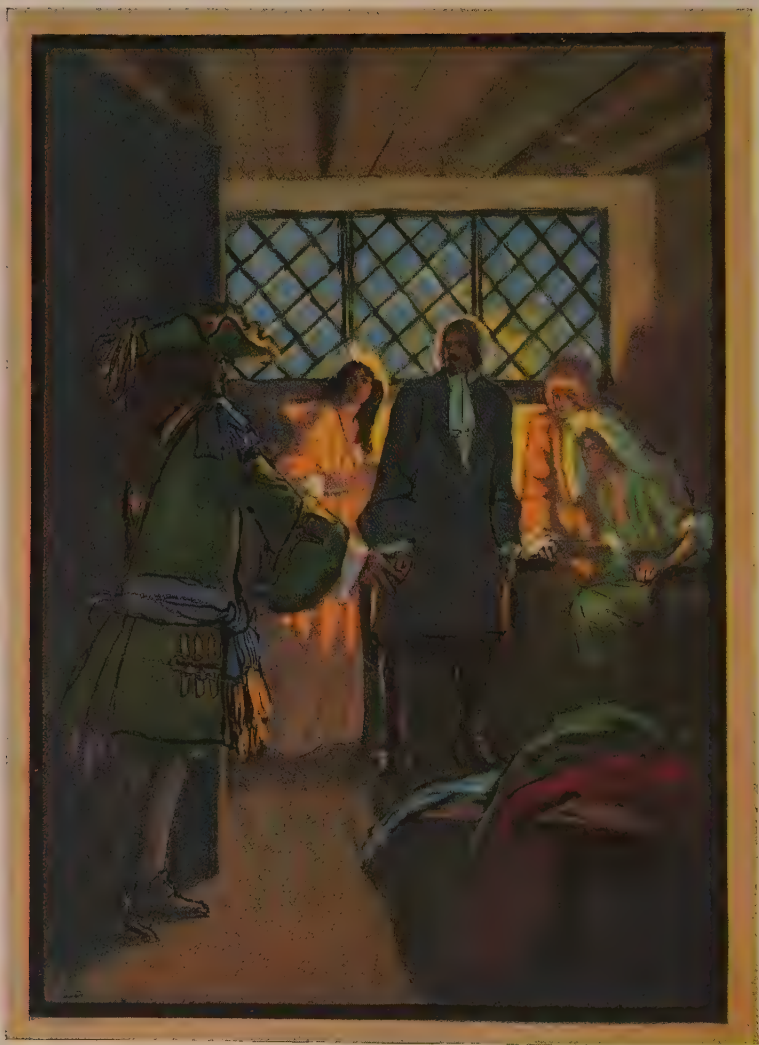
A fatuous smile lighted up Saint-Marly's face. He stepped away from the door and, removing his hat, made her a low bow as she and Philip hurried past him.

Philip's eyes widened with dismay at sight of the main room of the house. Round the table where the little family had partaken of so many happy meals half a dozen dragoons were sitting in attitudes of great comfort, laughing, drinking and holding playing cards before them.

All about on the floor lay their arms and equipment; and bits of discarded food, the remains of their dinner, were scattered here and there among the dry grass and rushes and upon the hearth.

"What—what does it mean?" said Philip. "And, Germaine, where are mother and father?"

"It means," replied the girl as they mounted the stairway, "that we shall have to live like



"The King wills it!"



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this until we accept the King's faith. The Edict of Nantes has been revoked. Soldiers are being quartered on all the Huguenots. They will depart only when we agree to change our religion."

"And mother and father—"

"They are in here." And Germaine opened the door at the head of the stairway.

"Philip!" cried the mother in alarm. "Oh, my boy—your hand—"

In as few words as possible Germaine described what had happened. She had hardly finished, when a soldier boldly entered the room and announced that the family would have to be content with a smaller room at the other end of the house.

Jean La Fere stepped toward him with flashing eyes. "Must I and my family live henceforth in one room?" he demanded. "Must my house become a barrack for soldiers of the King who are careless of their habits and who eat and throw away my hard-earned food?"

"The King wills it," replied the man soberly. "Twelve dragoons have been assigned to this

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house, and eight more are coming tonight. They must have lodging and food."

"It is infamous!" cried the father clenching his fists.

"Accept the King's faith and your troubles will end," retorted the soldier.

"That I will never do!" declared Jean La Fere. "I love France, and I am a loyal subject of the King, but the faith I hold is a matter solely between myself and God!"

"As for that we shall see," remarked the dragoon grimly.

He remained there until the family had gathered together the few essentials that the room contained, and moved out with them into the hall.

The room at the other end of the house was the one that Germaine had occupied. It contained little besides a bed, a chair and a small chest for clothing. And even while the four were putting down their belongings and wondering how they should all manage to sleep there, the door opened and the same dragoon appeared, followed by three others. Without a word they threw the chair into the hall and then proceeded to carry off the bed.



"Gentlemen!" remonstrated the father. "You leave us nothing!"

"The soldiers must be provided for," was the reply. "The King wills it." This was a stock phrase, which was to be the keynote of the whole persecution.

After they had gone, the mother covered her face with her hands while Germaine sought to comfort her as best she could. Philip looked full at his father. Jean La Fere's face was drawn and haggard, but it betrayed no sign of weakness.

"Philip," he said, putting his hand gently on his son's shoulder, "this is your fourteenth birthday. You are scarcely yet a man, but you are face to face with a situation that calls for all the fortitude of a man. The dragoons came at noon today. I had foreseen their coming, and I know what will follow. They will make our lives unbearable; they will heap insults and indignities upon us in the hope that we will accept the King's religion. For myself I will never yield—never! But you, Philip, and your sister are both young. If the pressure they bring to bear proves too much and

you bend to their wishes, I shall grieve, but I shall feel in my heart no censure—”

“I will never yield to them!” cried Philip.

“I hope you may never have to,” replied Jean La Fere, “but you are not aware of the hardships of the dragonades in Poitou, under Marillac, and elsewhere. Many of our good brethren have yielded; many have fled the country.”

“Then let us flee also!” replied Philip.

The father nodded his head slowly. “There is time to think of that. For the present I judge it best to wait.”

And so began the hated dragonades in the household of Jean La Fere. To Philip in his ignorance, and despite the warning that he had had the previous spring, the coming of the soldiers was like a bolt from a clear sky.

In reality the movement was in no way sudden or unpremeditated. The Marquis de Louvois, the minister of war, had instigated it, urging it upon the King as a measure of incalculable good for France. The clergy brought to bear upon him all their matchless cunning and sophistry, flattering him with



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pious words. And Madame de Maintenon, the King's favorite, used all her powerful influence in an effort to help him take the magnificent step that should unite the kingdom under one religion. Nor did they find Louis an unsympathetic listener.

On the fifteenth of October, with one stroke of the pen, he set aside the last remaining liberties of conscience that his grandfather, Henry IV, had striven so hard to win for his subjects.

The first problem that confronted the family of Jean La Fere was to find a way to sleep. The evening was cold, and they had no blankets. Germaine opened the small chest and drew forth a heavy shawl, which she insisted that her mother should take; the chest contained no other apparel that would keep out the cold.

Philip strode into the hall, announcing that he would try to find a blanket or two. Up from the main room came the sounds of singing and hoarse laughter mingled with the clump of heavy shoes and the scraping and banging of chairs.

He hesitated outside the door to the large room that his parents had occupied; then with trembling fingers he pushed it open. Within, seated upon the bed, were three or four officers among whom he recognized the King's lieutenant.

"Ho, there, young whelp!" cried Saint-Marly. "Have you come to confess your sins?"

"I've come to ask for blankets," replied Philip. "The night is cold, and my family are without beds or covering."

Two of the officers began to laugh, and Saint-Marly roared, "Step inside and close the door behind you. Now hold up your hand—no, the other one with the rag upon it. There," he added, turning to the others, "that is my mark! He forgot his manners, and I had to remind him."

"He seems not to have profited by your lesson, Nicolas," observed one of his companions.

"By heaven, that is true!" cried Saint-Marly.

He sprang to the floor and, seizing the end of a blanket, pulled it from the bed. Then

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with a quick step forward he cast it over Philip's head, exclaiming, "There! You want a blanket. Now you have it!"

In a moment the men were gathered round the boy, pushing him from one to another, laughing and roaring forth crude witticisms, pulling him rudely to his feet when he stumbled, spinning him this way and that way with sharp thrusts of the arm until at last he sank to the floor, unable to rise from dizziness and exhaustion.

"Now get out!" cried the lieutenant, kicking him. "And next time remember your manners."

Philip rose and staggered to the door, but Saint-Marly called him back. "Here," he said, lifting the discarded blanket, "take this to that black-eyed sister of yours. Tell her Nicolas Saint-Marly sends it with his compliments!"

A burst of raucous laughter rose from the others, and Philip, so weak and dizzy that he could hardly see, staggered through the doorway. Entering the little room at the end of the house, he handed the blanket to his



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mother and then lay down in one corner, thankful for the darkness that hid him.

That was only a sample of the treatment the family were to receive at the hands of a brutal soldiery. During the next few days the men missed no chance to annoy and humiliate the La Feres. They forced the mother and daughter to cook for them at all hours of the day and night. They broke furniture apparently for the joy of breaking it, including a small hand loom that Jean La Fere had constructed after many hours of painstaking labor. They talked and sang after the manner of the camp, unmindful of the sensibilities of the two women. They tore up the garden at the back of the house, and on several occasions one of the soldiers caused much laughter by leading his horse into the main room and allowing the creature to nibble at the grass on the floor. And all this and worse in the name of religion!

There were six other Huguenot families in Bellefontaine, and they suffered much the same treatment. They saw their homes desecrated, their money taken from them,



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their choicest possessions dragged forth and sold at auction to the highest bidders. And in some cases torture was resorted to where all other measures failed. In that respect the La Feres were fortunate; and they owed their good-fortune to Saint-Marly and his openly avowed admiration for Germaine.

At the end of the first five days of the dragonades, of the twenty-six Huguenots in the village, fourteen went over to the old faith, three fled to the hills for the purpose of eventually reaching a country where they might worship unmolested; and nine, among them the La Fere family, still remained firm in their belief. And what happened in Bellefontaine was typical of other communities. License, cruelty and coarse brutality were excused with a phrase—"The King wills it."

On the evening of the sixth day Jean La Fere called his family about him in the chill bare little room where they had suffered so much. "Germaine and Philip," he said in a low, trembling voice, "your mother has heard what I am about to say to you, and she is of my own mind. Listen attentively, and if either

of you has any doubts, do not hesitate to voice them. To be brief, I propose that we lose no time in leaving France. To remain here longer among savage enemies who are without scruple seems to me unwise and hopeless. After all, we are only human, and in the end we must either yield or die. I propose, therefore, that we attempt to cross the border into Geneva, since that is our nearest refuge. Such an attempt," he continued impressively, "may very likely fail, and if we are taken, it is probable they will transport us to America—"

An involuntary gasp of terror escaped Germaine's lips, and before her eyes flashed a multitude of horrible pictures based on stories she had heard of that far-off land. But she suddenly clenched her cold hands and replied, "I do not fear that! I am willing to risk it."

"Yes, and I am willing!" added Philip.

"Then," continued the father, with a sigh of relief, "it remains for us to make our plans. Now move closer to me, so that I need not speak so loud."

Until late into the night the family continued to talk in earnest, breathless whispers



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—and this was the first good opportunity that Philip had had of describing his meeting with Adair. Happily the young Huguenot noble—or at least the ruined castle—fitted in nicely with the plans of Jean La Fere.

"It will be necessary," he pointed out, "for the four of us to leave Bellefontaine the same night, since if any remain, they will be held accountable for the others, and 'twould go hard with them. Yet it would be unwise for all of us to travel far in a body; that would create suspicion. I suggest therefore that on the morrow, if the night is favorable, we slip forth from the house, make our way up the valley to the vicinity of this ruined castle, with which few hereabouts are familiar, and remain there concealed until the soldiers have abandoned the search. Then we may set out in pairs for Geneva—I with Germaine, Philip with his mother. And if perchance the young Marquis de Florac is still at the ruin, he may very well wish to join us. At any rate the old castle should prove an excellent place of concealment."

The sun rose bright and warm the following



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morning. Joy and gladness seemed reflected in the broad, shimmering fields and the winding, tree-lined roads. In sharp contrast with the weather, the dragoons were more brutal than ever, irritated by the obstinacy of the La Fere family. Twice in the course of the morning Philip had his ears boxed for some trivial and pretended offence; and the insults that were hurled at the father, whenever he appeared downstairs, were more vile and cruel than usual.

Shortly before noon Philip and his sister, each with a bucket, went to the river for water. The girl had just filled her bucket beside the bridge and was waiting for her brother to fill his, when the bulky, resplendent form of Saint-Marly appeared behind her.

"Ah," he said with his fatuous smile, "this is scarcely a task for one so delicate—and so pretty! Let me assist you."

As he stepped toward her, Germaine drew back from him, her dark eyes flashing. "I need no assistance," she replied coldly.

Saint-Marly, with a surprising agility in one so big, sprang forward and caught the girl's



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wrist; at the same time he cast a threatening look at Philip, who had advanced, empty bucket in hand, to aid his sister. "Take care, young whelp," he warned the boy, "or you shall need a bandage for the other hand! And now, my pretty queen—"

"Not so fast, Nicolas Saint-Marly! I say not so fast!"

All three turned at the surprising words, and there on the bridge stood the young Marquis de Florac, his dark eyes full of fire, his lips curved in a mocking, contemptuous smile.

Saint-Marly dropped the girl's hand and laid hold of his sword. "Who are you?" he cried. "And what means this impertinence?"

The young noble strode easily from the bridge and advanced to within three paces of the lieutenant. "You have a bad memory, Nicolas Saint-Marly. We met, I think, at Paris last April, when you went out of your way to insult a kinsman of mine, now dead, who at the time was too ill to give you your deserts. I have not forgotten that. Since your memory seems to be as bad as your habits, permit me to refresh it. I am Raoul



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Adair de Gautier, Marquis de Florac de la Tour de Bosc—at your service.” And removing his wide black hat, he swung it toward the ground in a sweeping bow.

“By heaven!” cried Saint-Marly. “I do remember you! And now we shall settle an old score!”

“And a new one,” added Adair, with a meaning glance at Germaine, who was standing wide-eyed and trembling beside her brother.

The marquis drew his sword, fished in his pocket until he found a length of white cord and then, applying it to the blade, gravely knotted it and passed it to the other. “You have the length of my blade,” he said. “There remain only the hour and the place.”

Saint-Marly’s face was flushed and angry, but there was no fear in the look he gave the Huguenot, only defiance and burning hatred. He pointed to a close-growing group of trees in a bend of the stream on the opposite side, perhaps a quarter of a league from the village. “You will find me there beneath those trees in an hour,” he said. “My seconds will be—”



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"I care not who they be," replied Adair. "They are acceptable to me. For myself I shall have none, unless—unless this lad—"

As Philip stepped quickly to Adair's side, Saint-Marly gave vent to a burst of scornful, ringing laughter.

Philip presented his sister to Adair and then explained what had been happening at the village during the past week.

"I suspected as much," replied the marquis. "It is one reason that brought me here. I am overjoyed that I arrived at a moment when I could be of some slight service. And now, Philip, if you are ready, we had best set forth for yonder wood. For if I remain longer at your village, I shall doubtless find myself with other duels on my hands."

"Oh!" cried Germaine. "He will kill you!"

"Have no fear, mademoiselle," was the gallant reply. "This will not be the first day has seen me in fair combat—nor the last, I hope."

He linked his arm in Philip's, and the two set off across the bridge. The sun had gone into a cloud, leaving the countryside chill and gray.



"Bravo!"



Chapter Three

A SWORD THRUST

RAIN began to fall soon after Philip and Adair reached the wood where the duel was to take place. They seated themselves on a convenient rock, and the young noble, drawing his sword, flexed the blade and carefully inspected the guard.

To Philip, in his agitation, there was something vaguely foreboding about the whole scene—the dark, softly whispering wood behind them, the gray sky, the somber river out in front, the cold rain falling in a monotonous, increasing downpour. With an involuntary shudder he glanced anxiously at Adair, unable to suppress the disquieting thought that perhaps in another hour his friend might be lying pale and rigid there beside the river, his face upturned to the sky.

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"Saint-Marly is a shining example of the kind of tool the King chooses to enforce a despicable order," observed Adair. "And yet if I pass this sword through his great body, what good will come of it? There are thousands of others as bad, or worse, than he."

"You will seek to kill him?" inquired Philip.

"As to that I am unable to say," his companion replied meditatively. "I take no pleasure in killing a man. Whether our plum-colored friend lives or dies in this affair depends largely on himself."

"But, Adair," exclaimed Philip, "he may—he may kill you! I have heard it said that he is a brilliant swordsman."

"Yes, lad, he is a swordsman of no mean ability, and it is not impossible I may die by his blade. I do not expect to, but fate may play me one of her tricks. That is why I am pleased to have you at hand when our blades meet. You may be of great service—" A flash of white teeth completed the thought.

"I do not see how you can be so calm, how you can smile, when so much is at stake!" cried Philip.



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"You will learn to do it," replied Adair. "The motto of the de Gautiers is: 'We smile in adversity.' I merely do what others of my blood have been doing since the Crusades." He leaned forward, exclaiming, "Ah, we shall not have long to wait!"

Philip, peering down the river, distinguished three bright-clad figures approaching through the rain, and his heart began to pound.

"We still have a considerable time for talk," continued Adair. "Tell me, Philip, more about your family. You spoke a while back of a plan for getting safe out of France. What is this plan?"

Philip outlined it in detail, and at the end Adair said, "Yes, it is feasible, albeit desperate and with many odds against success. Still it is better than remaining at Bellefontaine. The thought of your family will lend skill to my wrist, for as your father correctly intimated, I wish with all my heart to take part in this journey to Geneva. If the rain continues, the night will be propitious for the venture. When I have finished with Saint-Marly I shall return without delay to my castle and there await your coming."

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He rose and sheathed his sword. "Come, Philip," he added with a laugh, "shake off that look of melancholy! Remember the good advice you once gave me. Remember the valiant Henry and his white plume! There, I am glad to see you smile; it heartens me! And now your hand!"

Philip sprang to his feet and seized his friend's outstretched hand. Then Adair folded his arms on his chest and, with head thrown back in a gesture of calm indifference, awaited the coming of his adversary.

Saint-Marly and his seconds were in the wood now, and Philip recognized the two companions as members of the party that had mistreated him in the lieutenant's room the first evening of the dragonades. They were both small, dark-eyed, dark-haired men, one clad in green, the other in scarlet.

"Gentlemen, I am obliged to you for being prompt," Adair greeted them. He drew his sword and waved it toward the river. "This piece of ground seems suited to our purpose; the footing is better than yonder by the meadow."

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Saint-Marly inclined his head while his seconds went over the ground, scrutinizing it closely, testing here and there a doubtful place with the heel of their boots. After a few minutes they returned and spoke briefly to the lieutenant, who drew his sword, handed his hat to the man in green and remarked to Adair:

"If you are ready, let us begin at once."

"I am ready," replied Adair, tossing his hat aside and lifting his sword.

Saint-Marly advanced. The blades touched with a shrill, vibrant ring, then drew apart. The King's lieutenant lunged, but Adair's sword met the thrust, sending the point of his adversary's weapon harmlessly upward. The two bright-clad seconds exchanged glances, then settled themselves to view the affair with professional interest.

Round and round on the wet earth the combatants circled, feinting, quickly recovering, each seeking to draw the other out. And all the while the rain continued its steady down-pour, pattering among the leaves overhead, roughening the dark surface of the river.

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During the first few minutes of the combat Philip could hardly breathe, so heavy was the pounding of his heart. But gradually as he noted the ease with which Adair parried his opponent's thrusts, he began to view the affair more calmly. The young noble's face was flushed and rain-spattered, but his thrusts, his parries, his sudden movements to one side or the other were made with an ease and grace that brought exclamations of admiration to the lips even of Saint-Marly's companions. And once when his adversary slipped on a patch of mud and Adair lowered his blade and gallantly withdrew a pace, the man in scarlet cried, "Bravo!"

With a muttered angry word Saint-Marly recovered himself and sprang to the attack, thrusting high and low with lightning rapidity. Adair retired cautiously before the savage attack, content merely to parry Saint-Marly's flashing blade.

Suddenly Philip's heart seemed to leap into his throat. Without realizing it, Adair was retreating step by step toward a muddy, slippery piece of ground near the edge of the



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river. As a matter of fact, so furious was Saint-Marly's attack that the young Huguenot dared not risk a glance backward. Philip stood with eyes and mouth wide, wanting to cry out in warning, but held mute by something like terror.

When Adair was scarcely three paces from the treacherous ground, Saint-Marly, seeing the advantage within his grasp, pressed his opponent still harder. Adair drew back a pace to avoid a thrust. Sparks of fire leaped out from the clashing blades. Again Saint-Marly lunged, this time in a wild, reckless fury that left his guard uncovered; and even as Adair sprang back to avoid the steel, he was preparing a thrust that should finish his enemy.

He never made the thrust. His left foot touched the edge of the mire and slid backward, and the next instant he was on his hands and knees. He was half-rising when Saint-Marly drove the point of his blade full at the Huguenot's throat. Philip, rushing forward, had a glimpse of his friend struggling to avoid the weapon; then a cry of anguish

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broke from the boy as he saw Saint-Marly's sword bury itself in Adair's right shoulder, the point emerging like a red tongue of fire half a dozen inches on the other side.

Adair's face went suddenly white. He relaxed into a heap on the ground, his sword falling a few inches from him. Saint-Marly, towering above him, drew back his blade as if for a second thrust; but the man in scarlet caught his arm, exclaiming, "You have done for him enough, Nicolas!" And with a short, mirthless laugh Saint-Marly turned abruptly on his heel.

"Thank you, my scarlet friend," came the faint voice of Adair. Then with a smile on his lips he suddenly lost consciousness.

One glance was sufficient to satisfy Philip that Saint-Marly and his companions had no further interest in the wounded noble. Even while Philip was tearing the clothing free from Adair's shoulder, they locked arms, the King's lieutenant in the middle, and with swaggering gait set off in the direction of Bellefontaine.

With some difficulty Philip succeeded in

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stopping the flow of blood, binding up the wound with pieces of cloth torn from the lining of his own coat. A few minutes later Adair's eyes opened, and he passed one hand across his moist forehead.

"Ah, Philip," he said with a faint smile, "fate has played me one of her tricks." And he reached out and touched the muddy ground.

"It was a ruse—a vile and cowardly ruse!" replied Philip vehemently. "Saint-Marly saw this mud and forced you back upon it! You might have done the same for him—but you lowered your blade!"

"I am not sorry for that act," said Adair. "But we gain nothing by talk. What concerns me now is to reach my ruin, where I have salves that may lessen the sting of this accursed wound. Come, let me see if I can walk."

With the help of Philip he stood up and took a few steps. "It is not so bad. I am stronger than I should have thought. After all, what is a clean thrust through the shoulder? It numbs the arm; it causes the blood to flow; it deprives one of the joy of



combat. But it leaves one's legs sound—at least I feel no weakness in mine," he added. "And since I am so fortunate, I think it best to lose no time in making my way up the valley. I have no other place to go. My sword, Philip! I may need it again; for I propose to make a point of living until I have once more crossed blades with our plum-colored friend."

They set off up the valley, Philip carrying the sword in one hand and supporting Adair with the other. Their progress was necessarily slow, and halts for rest were frequent, for the marquis, despite his fine words, was not so strong as he supposed. At last, however, they arrived at the head of the waterfall, and there Adair insisted that Philip turn back.

"Your absence will cause concern," he argued, "and now that I am at home, I can take care of myself. 'Tis not the first time I have been wounded. And, Philip," he added significantly, "the rain still continues, and the night will be dark."

"Oh," protested the boy, "my father will not think of carrying out his plan of escape

when I tell him of what has happened to you!"

"That is not sound sense," retorted Adair. "Each additional day spent in Bellefontaine subjects your family to further indignities—and it may be many weeks ere we have another such night. Moreover, I have a wound that will give me difficulty to dress alone. That, I admit, is a selfish argument, but so loath am I for your mother and sister to remain another evening among the dragoons that I add it along with the rest. And now, Philip, all has been said. Au revoir!"

A few minutes later Philip was on his way toward Bellefontaine. It was night when he reached the village, and rain was still falling—not the heavy downpour of the afternoon, but a cold, fog-like drizzle that veiled and dimmed the yellow lights in the windows along the street. As he hurried toward his home he could hear the shouts of merriment that came from the various Huguenot houses where the soldiers were gathered.

The door to his house stood wide open, revealing a group of twenty or more soldiers standing or sitting round the table, where

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several of their number were engaged in a spirited game of cards. Saint-Marly, a little apart with two other officers, stared hard at him as he entered, but the lieutenant made no comment, and Philip lost no time in mounting the stairs.

The first words that greeted him as he entered the dark little room where his family were gathered were from Germaine. "Philip!" she cried, catching him in her arms. "Is it true they killed him—that fine, brave-hearted young man?"

"Who said that? Saint-Marly?"

"Yes, he boasted of it to me — "

"He lied!" exclaimed Philip angrily. "The marquis was wounded—wounded because of a treacherous, cowardly trick that Saint-Marly played. He received a sword thrust through the shoulder." Then with mother, father and sister listening breathless in the darkness, Philip gave an account of the whole affair, concluding with Adair's hope that they lose no time in leaving Bellefontaine and his desire to accompany them on the hazardous journey to Geneva.

There was a long period of silence; then in a voice scarcely above a whisper Jean La Fere said, "It is sound advice, and since we are prepared for flight, I see no reason why we should delay longer. Let us consider carefully, and then when they are at last silent below, let us go forth with courage in our hearts and a prayer upon our lips."

Jean La Fere had prepared as best he could for the venture. That morning, from an opening below a loose board in the floor beneath the stairway, he had managed to take, unseen, a small bag of coins that he had hoarded through long years—all the money the family possessed. And now and then in the course of the day his wife, at his suggestion, had carried off in her apron scraps of food from the stove. This food the father had divided into four small packets, which he now distributed. "It is best thus," he pointed out. "We may be separated at first, and it is essential that each of us have food."

After all details of the escape had been carefully discussed, the family lay down to wait for the house to become quiet. It seemed

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to Philip hours that he lay there listening to the sounds of revelry in the room below. In spite of his nervousness he finally dozed off; when he awoke, he was startled to realize that the singing and laughing had ceased.

He sat up in the darkness. The floor boards in the hallway at the other end of the house creaked under the thump of heavy boots; then a door slammed, leaving the house silent again. Presently he heard the sound of interrupted, unmusical singing in the street and the clatter of boots on the cobblestones. The noise became fainter and fainter, then died away. A dog began to howl, but ceased with a frightened yelp as if it had been kicked. Philip lay back on the floor, his eyes wide, his lips parted, his whole body trembling with excitement. Again he dozed off, only to waken suddenly from a frightful dream that had left him covered with drops of perspiration.

Jean La Fere's hand rested on his son's shoulder. "The hour has come," he whispered. "I shall go first to make sure all is well; then your mother and Germaine will



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follow. When you are sure they are safe out of the house, lose no time in joining us. Remember, we shall cross the bridge. May God in his mercy aid us!"

He rose and tiptoed to the door. The hinges creaked slightly; a board in the hallway groaned. A few minutes later Philip, standing close against the wall, felt the arms of his mother and sister about him and heard their whispered words of courage and good counsel. As they passed silently out into the hall, he could hardly refrain from accompanying them; but by a great effort he checked the desire. Three persons in the hall and on the stairway at one time might be sufficient to rouse one of the soldiers. He could hear the creak of boards as his mother and sister moved cautiously toward the stairs—loud, groaning creaks that sounded with horrible foreboding in his ears.

A minute passed, then two minutes. Philip could wait no longer. He tiptoed to the door, stepped out into the hallway, then suddenly halted as if frozen to the spot. The door to Saint-Marly's room, between him and the

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head of the stairs, had opened a few inches, throwing a long finger of yellow candle light out upon the floor. Gradually the finger began to widen, and a moment later, just as Philip was stepping quickly back into the room, he had a glimpse of the King's lieutenant partly dressed and holding a candlestick above his head.

Standing a few inches from the threshold, Philip waited in an agony of suspense, certain that Saint-Marly had heard the footfalls of Germaine and her mother. The rays of the candle grew brighter as the officer moved toward the door. Philip stepped farther into the room. The wind from the open window behind him blew in cold and damp upon his back, but he scarcely felt it.

The bulky form of Saint-Marly, grotesquely distorted by the wavering flame of the candle, suddenly filled the doorway. For a long moment he stood there, and Philip observed that he was in his stockinged feet and wore none of the accoutrements of his rank.

"Where are the others?" demanded the officer.



Philip moistened his lips. "I—I cannot tell you," he replied.

With a savage gleam in his eyes, Saint-Marly strode forward. Philip dodged into a corner. The lieutenant sprang at him, with his free hand outstretched. The suddenness of the movement along with a puff of air from the window extinguished the candle, leaving the room in total darkness. Philip dropped to his knees and squirmed to one side, brushing against the legs of the lieutenant. The next instant he was on his feet again, rushing for the doorway. He struck one side of the wall, then staggered through the opening into the hallway and ran at top speed for the stairs. Saint-Marly's footsteps sounded only a few paces behind him.

Down the stairway Philip went in a headlong rush. The door to the house was still open, and as he darted out into the mist-filled street, he could hear the lieutenant's hoarse shouts of alarm, which were answered almost immediately by the voice of a sentry in the direction of the bridge.

At the sound of the sentry's voice Philip

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knew that escape in that direction would be impossible. He suddenly turned and, retracing his steps, ran through an alley between two houses on the northern side of the street. Emerging upon a meadow, he set off across it in the general direction of the rendezvous, knowing that by remaining on the west side of the river, he might keep his pursuers from crossing to the other bank, where his parents and Germaine had gone. Glancing over his shoulder, he saw that lights were beginning to appear in the long row of hidden houses. He redoubled his efforts, stumbling frequently, splashing through unseen puddles, colliding with bushes that scratched his face and hands—but always pressing on, on toward the head of the valley, his mind divided between exultation over his escape and anxiety for his mother and father and Germaine.





Chapter Four

THE BEGINNING OF A QUEST

AT THE end of half an hour Philip halted on a rise of ground to regain his breath and to listen for sounds of pursuit. Voices reached his ears faintly—voices far to the south and on the other side of the river. He trembled as he thought of his parents and Germaine, but at last he succeeded in putting aside his fears. After all, his family had had several minutes' start, and doubtless they had made good use of it.

He set forth again, traveling now at a dog-trot, now at a fast walk, and moving gradually to the east until before many minutes he heard the murmur of the river among the reeds and grasses at his right. The fog and drizzle shrouded everything as in a thick blanket, but whenever he blundered into a tree trunk, or went to his knees against a

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jutting rock, he cheered himself with the thought that the dragoons were experiencing the same difficulties.

Leg-weary and with a sharp pain in his side, he finally reached the foot of the waterfall, which was gurgling loudly now with the heavy rains of the afternoon. He sat down and bathed his face in the water, keeping his ears alert for any sound that might indicate the presence of his family or of the soldiers. Several times he softly called the name of his sister, but the only response was a multitude of hollow echoes. At last he rose and began to climb the waterfall, wondering if his family might not already have gone before him. The climb was long and painful and resulted in numerous slips and bruises, but when he finally reached the top, it was with the feeling that he had left behind forever the valley where he and his family had suffered so much.

He crossed the plain to the ruin and, after considerable groping, found the vine-hung door and passed inside.

"Ah, Philip, you have come?"



Adair halted and stood for several moments in profound silence.



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The sound of that familiar, unexpected voice made him jump. "Adair!" he cried. "Are they here?"

"No, lad. I have not slept, thanks to this pain in my shoulder. I should have heard them had they climbed the waterfall. But come here where I am lying—beside the fireplace—and tell me all that has happened. At least you are here!"

Philip groped his way across the hall and seated himself upon the rough boards close to his friend. Then he told him of the escape, omitting no details. When he had finished, Adair said:

"I see no cause for alarm. You came swiftly from Bellefontaine; the others naturally could not hope to match your pace. Granted they have eluded their pursuers, they should arrive ere dawn—or at least shortly thereafter. We can only wait and hope."

"Yes, that is true," agreed Philip.

The rest of the night dragged slowly out with long pauses between snatches of conversation. Now and then Adair would doze off, only to rouse again after a few minutes. Philip

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sat shivering with his back against the fireplace, frequently starting at the slightest sound and going to the door to listen. And gradually with each passing hour the conviction grew upon him that his family had met with misfortune.

A gray, reluctant dawn found him at the head of the waterfall, waiting, hoping, striving in vain to reassure himself that perhaps in a few minutes he should catch a glimpse of Germaine's yellow dress down there among the trees. An hour passed, and at last with a heavy heart he returned to the ruin. Adair was sitting up, munching a crust of bread; his face looked pale and haggard in the uncertain light.

"I am afraid they have been taken," said Philip sorrowfully.

"They may only be hiding somewhere," argued the marquis. "They may arrive later, possibly this evening. All things are possible, lad, and we must keep a stout heart. Let us eat; happily we have sufficient food for several days."

After they had eaten, Philip helped to dress



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his friend's wound, forgetting his anxiety for a few minutes.

All that day and the next they remained at the castle. At the end of that time Adair admitted reluctantly that he feared misfortune had overtaken the missing ones, and said he meant to find out definite news concerning them.

On the morning of the third day—a bright, sunlit morning—he announced that the wound in his shoulder was no longer a thing to keep him idle in one spot; and with something of his former buoyant air, he strode toward the waterfall, bidding his friend try to be patient until his return. "I shall do my best to learn what has happened," he promised.

Two hours later Philip had just removed the bandage from his hand, when his friend reentered the banquet hall. As Adair crossed the floor, the look in his face sent a chill to the boy's heart. He rose and grasped the edge of the table for support.

"Philip," said Adair gently, "I am the bearer of painful news. You must steel yourself to receive it—"



"They have been taken!"

"Alas, they were taken on the first evening." Adair put his arm around Philip's shoulders. "Oh, Philip, my friend," he continued, speaking with an effort, "I would give my right arm not to have to tell you the truth! I chanced upon a peasant—a man of the King's faith, who mistook me for one of his own belief—and from him I learned all. Your mother and father and sister, as I said, were taken the first evening, and the following day they left Bellefontaine in a detachment headed by Saint-Marly—"

"Oh!" cried Philip, clinging more tightly to the table. "Oh, Adair, they are in prison, then!"

"It is even worse than that, I fear. If the fellow spoke the truth—and, alas, I am satisfied that he did—your family are on their way to Marseilles, there to await transportation to America."

Philip's legs suddenly went weak beneath him. He dropped to the bench and, covering his face with his arms, slumped forward upon the table. Adair remained standing in front

of the hearth, his head bent, his eyes troubled and compassionate. After a few minutes he walked to one of the windows and gazed meditatively off across the wild valley.

He was still in the same position when Philip lifted his head and drew his sleeve across his eyes. He rose with a sudden movement as if to shake from his mind all fear and indecision; and Adair, turning, beheld with surprise and joy the flashing blue eyes that met his own.

"I am going to find them!" cried Philip in a voice that matched the flash of his eyes. "If they are sent to America, I shall follow them! America, they say, is a land of deep jungles, peopled with venomous serpents and savage men. I do not fear that! Nor do I fear the thought of becoming a slave. I shall set forth at once to find them!"

"And I shall accompany you!" exclaimed the marquis. "'Tis good to hear you speak with that ringing voice! I have cast my lot with yours. I urged upon your people this venture which has gone amiss. I could not, if I would, desert you at such an hour. More-

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over, I am a man of delicate moods and sensibilities—call it mysticism if you like. I said 'twas lucky chance that led you in the first place to my ruined house; I believe now 'twas lucky chance for both of us. Let us then devote our youth and energies to this quest—with courage in our hearts, with tolerance for those who know not the meaning of the word, and with loyalty toward those who deserve our friendship! In short, Philip, let us follow the creed and teaching represented by this splendid relic which once waved from the majestic head of our gallant Henry!" And he tapped his throat, where the white plume lay concealed in its leather case.

Philip felt a thrill pass through his body—a thrill that urged him to act with all the energy he possessed and at once.

"I read your approval in your face!" continued Adair eagerly. Then becoming abruptly sober, "But before we go forth, let us consider well. What lies before us we shall not achieve by intrepidity alone. We must be circumspect. First, it is necessary to be sure beyond a doubt that your family are to be deported;

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I fear in my soul 'tis only too true, but we must leave nothing to chance. Happily our legs are sound; your hand, I see, has shed its bandage, and my own wound grows better rather than worse. I propose therefore that we make our way to the south, following the track of our plum-colored friend as best we may and picking up such scraps of information as we can gather."

"And if we learn that my family have been deported to America," replied Philip, "then we must follow them—but how?"

"By way of England, or Holland," was Adair's prompt answer. "Perchance at Marseilles, or one of the neighboring ports we may meet with an English or Dutch captain, who, for a consideration, will take us aboard. I said I was without money; I am not quite so bad off as that. There are in my purse a few gold pieces, which we must not touch save when urgently necessary. And remember this, Philip: our policy, or plan of campaign, is that of opportunists. We do as best we can from day to day, from moment to moment."

That evening, as the moon was pushing

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upward from behind the eastern hills, the two friends set forth on their great quest. When they reached the head of the waterfall, Adair halted and, removing his hat, stood for several moments in profound silence, watching the play of moonlight on the broken, crumbling walls, once the pride of the de Gautiers, now forfeit to the Crown. Then he turned abruptly and rejoined Philip, who was awaiting him in the gully.

They descended the waterfall and thence made their way down the valley for perhaps half a league, where a second and smaller valley opened into the first on the eastern side. Traversing this second valley, they finally emerged upon a rough, wide-spreading tract of wasteland and set out across it in a southeasterly direction. Adair was familiar with the province and was sure of the route that a party on their way to Marseilles would be most likely to take.

At the end of three hours of walking the two companions came to the small village of Lozette nestled against the shoulder of a mountain. The half-score of houses that com-

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posed it were dark except for one a little apart from the rest.

"There are no soldiers about," observed Adair. "Perhaps we can learn something from yonder house where the light is burning."

They approached it boldly, and, after first peering in at one of the windows, Adair rapped at the door. Someone stirred inside; then after a long pause they heard footsteps and finally the complaining voice of an old woman:

"Who comes to my door at so late an hour?"

"We are two strangers," replied Adair, "and we seek information. Tell us, good mother, can we reach Marseilles by this road?"

"Yes, if you have the strength to keep walking. It leads to the main road."

"Tell us," continued Adair, "is this road much traveled of late?"

"Not by honest folk," was the somewhat surly reply, "only by soldiers and heretics."

"Ha!" exclaimed Adair. "Men who would go to prison rather than conform to the faith of the good King."

"Yes, and women also. But two days ago

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a party on foot passed through our village—mother, father and grown daughter, along with four of the King's dragoons. Such a fine girl she was—dark and straight like my own daughter, had she lived."

"Was the man tall and dark and clean-shaven?" inquired Adair.

A cackling laugh sounded within. "Maybe you are Huguenots also. Seeking friends, eh? Well, the man was neither tall, nor dark, nor clean-shaven; he was short with gray hair and whiskers. There, now I have told you! If you be heretics, I bid you leave our village, for we do not harbor them here."

"Thank you, good mother," said Adair, and the two friends turned away.

"It is they," observed Philip.

"Yes, the description fits them. And they cannot be far ahead of us, since they are afoot. If fortune favors us, we are sure to overtake them."

Shortly before morning Philip and Adair left the road and entered a wood that crowned a hilltop, whence they could view the country in two directions. There they remained hid-



den all day, partaking of the food they had with them, and sleeping most of the time. At evening they set out again.

In that way, walking at night and resting by day, they traveled for three days without coming upon Saint-Marly and his party. On the fourth night they learned the reason for it: at one of the villages where they made cautious inquiries they were told that the officer in charge had requisitioned two carts. Further information proved beyond a doubt that the officer was Saint-Marly and the prisoners Philip's parents and sister.

"I had hoped," Adair admitted, "that we might have o'ertaken them in one of these unimportant villages, where perhaps we might have liberated them by a bold stroke. That seems now impossible."

"Yes," agreed Philip, "and once we are in Marseilles, we ourselves run great risk of capture. But I am willing to chance it just in the hope of seeing them!"

On the fifth night they crossed the Rhone near Avignon, paying a boatman a few sous for the service; and at dawn, a little more

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than a week later, they entered Marseilles. The city was overwhelmingly of the King's faith, and Philip and his companion were well aware of the risks they ran while within its limits; but Adair pointed out that their greatest safety now lay in crowds.

"The greater the crowds," he added, "the less likely are we to be singled out and questioned. But in case anyone does question us, I shall pose as a noble who has met with reverses—which is only too true—and explain that you are my devoted servant."

"Which comes very close to the truth, also," added Philip, smiling.

The great seaport was fast awakening. Shopkeepers along the main avenue that led to the waterfront were taking down their shutters, talking vociferously the while to one another. Wagons and carts of all sizes and shapes were streaming in with their produce from the outlying districts, rattling upon the uneven streets, filling the spaces between the houses with squeaks and harsh bumpings. On one cart, painted light blue and drawn by a dirty gray horse, a peasant in a green smock



was lolling back upon the canvas that covered his load of vegetables, singing a country song at the top of his voice, without heeding the angry calls of a driver behind him, who wanted him to turn out so that sober, industrious folk might reach the market before nightfall. Everyone seemed to want to reach the market place before anyone else; and the two friends chose the market as their destination also.

To Philip the confusion and babble of the market place was fascinating. They remained there for almost half an hour, jostled by peasants and townsfolk, all the while keeping their ears alert for any word that might have to do with Huguenot prisoners or refugees. They learned nothing, however, and at last they made their way down to the waterfront, where vessels of all kinds and many nationalities lay against the long quay, with their bowsprits projecting far over the street.

Philip was watching an Italian craft that was unloading lemons, when he felt his companion's hand clutch and tighten on his arm. "Philip," came Adair's low voice, "look over

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your right shoulder—but wait a moment, then do it casually."

Philip continued to watch the vessel; presently he half-turned and glanced in the direction of the shops on the other side of the quay. As he did so, his body stiffened involuntarily. There in a doorway beside a wine shop, not twenty paces from them, stood Saint-Marly.





"Strive to show no alarm!"



Chapter Five

THE MAN WITH THE BANDAGE

THE King's lieutenant drew a large silver watch from beneath the folds of his coat, glanced at it with a frown and then strode abruptly into the hallway.

"Come," said Adair, linking his arm in Philip's. "We have had a close call. I am not sure even now that Saint-Marly did not see us."

The two strolled back along the quay, halting behind a pile of goods that a group of talking, gesticulating seamen were preparing to swing into the hold of a French vessel. Already a considerable crowd had gathered to watch the loading, and the two friends felt reasonably secure. Appearing to be much interested in the work, they managed, nevertheless, to keep a close watch on the doorway where Saint-Marly had disappeared.

They had been standing there perhaps ten minutes when the lieutenant again appeared, in company this time with two soldiers. One

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of them shouted something in the doorway, and a few moments later Philip's breath came in a quick gasp as a gray-haired man stepped out upon the cobblestones. "My father!" murmured the boy, taking a quick stride forward.

Adair suddenly caught his companion's arm and pointed to one of the vessels. "See," he said in a loud voice, "how the sun gleams on that masthead yonder." Then in a lower tone, "Strive to show no alarm! Our safety depends on it!"

Philip swallowed hard and gazed in the direction of Adair's pointing finger. When his eyes turned back to the doorway, he beheld his mother and sister standing a little apart from the father; with them were perhaps a dozen others, three or four men and the rest women and children. It required all his strength of will and Adair's restraining hand to keep him from rushing forward to join them.

Other soldiers appeared from within the house. At a word from Saint-Marly they formed the captives into a double line, old Jean La Fere at the head beside a tall, pale-

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faced man in a black cap, the mother and sister near the middle of the line but separated from each other. Drawing his sword, the lieutenant placed himself beside Jean La Fere, and the group set off along the quay. Many of the idlers who were watching the loading hastened to join them, and in a short time the procession was surrounded by men and boys and a few women, all laughing, grimacing and shouting epithets that, fortunately, were unintelligible to the two friends.

"Oh, Adair," murmured Philip, "they are being conducted to one of the vessels!"

"I fear 'tis so, Philip," was the reply. "Let us linger here a few minutes longer and then follow. It will do us no good to rush headlong and be taken."

"If I thought they would put me aboard the same vessel, I would give myself up to them!" declared Philip.

"Ah, they would do no such thing," argued his friend. "Saint-Marly would guess what it was you wanted and would not grant you the satisfaction."

He turned at the sound of a chuckle behind

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him and looked full into the face of a shabby rat of a man with a black bandage over one eye. Adair gazed hard at him, and the man shuffled toward the edge of the wharf, where he remained standing, his one eye fixed on the two friends—a sharp, piercing black eye that by its gleam and sparkle seemed to make up for the one that was missing.

"I like not the look of that fellow," observed Adair in a low voice. "We had best be rid of him."

A few minutes later the two friends entered one of the streets leading up from the quay, and glancing back, Philip could see the man with the bandage still in the same place with his one eye fixed upon them. Turning into a street on the left, they hurried along it in a direction parallel with the quay; then, after several minutes of brisk walking, they struck into a broad avenue that led down at an oblique angle to the waterfront.

They had gone only a score of yards when the procession of captives appeared in sight on the quay. The little party halted in front of a French brig in the bows of which stood

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a group of sailors in the act of lowering a rope ladder. The two friends could see the sunlight flash on Saint-Marly's plum-colored uniform as he strode forward and seized the dangling end. Then as if he were viewing part of a horrible dream, Philip watched his father ascend the ladder and pass out of sight upon the vessel. One by one, the others followed him, Germaine and her mother being among the last to enter the ship; and when all were aboard, the dragoons marched back in the direction from which they had come.

It was more than Philip could bear. His head went suddenly light and giddy; he reeled and, but for his companion, would have fallen.

"Courage, Philip," said Adair. "At least 'tis a good, sound ship that will bear them to America, and that is something to be thankful for."

"Oh, if I could only join them!" moaned the boy.

The street in which they lingered was deserted; everyone, it seemed, was on the quay to watch the hated heretics take ship for the savage land across the sea.

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The vessel lost no time in leaving port. Scarcely a quarter of an hour after the captives were aboard, she began to move slowly out from the wharf. A sail rose amid the creaks and shrill whinings of blocks, and flashed like a huge white gull in the bright sunlight. The vessel swung ponderously about, and the two friends caught a glimpse of gold on her stern; and then, after some difficulty, they made out her name: *La Belle Marie*.

They lingered there until the people returning to their shops and houses made it unsafe to remain longer. "Come," said Adair, "we may already have attracted too much notice."

They turned and began to retrace their steps up the hill. As they were emerging into the street that ran parallel with the quay, Adair, who was a few steps in advance, drew suddenly back.

"What is amiss?" cried Philip.

"Dragoons!" replied Adair. "And our plum-colored friend at the head of them." He glanced swiftly over his shoulder, and, spying an alleyway a score of paces down the long avenue, added, "Make for that alley, quick!"

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But even as they turned to run, a black-clad figure stepped forth from the passage, and they beheld the man with the bandage. He stood there motionless, watching them with his sinister, gleaming eye, his mouth twisted in a malevolent snarl.

"I fear 'tis a trap!" cried Adair. "Quick! Follow me!" And drawing his sword, he set off at a run in the direction of the quay.

The man with the bandage made no attempt to block the way; he merely raised one hand, and forth from the alley darted half a dozen soldiers, completely cutting off escape in that direction. Philip, a few paces behind Adair, heard the swift clash of steel and saw two of the soldiers go down before his friend's blade. The next instant the clatter of many feet sounded behind him. Then something struck the back of his head, and he pitched forward . . . a roar of voices filled his ears. He lifted his arms to protect his face. Everything went black.

It was not until a quarter of an hour later that Philip regained consciousness. He was lying upon a bundle of rags in one corner of a narrow, musty room lighted only by a small

square window covered with a heavy iron grating. His head was throbbing, and his whole body felt stiff and sore. He lifted a hand to his forehead, and a low voice close at hand said, "Philip, you are awake?"

"Adair! Where are we? How my head aches!"

The marquis moved closer to his friend. "We are prisoners, lad, in this vile room above the doorway on the quay, where we first saw Saint-Marly—the same room, I doubt not, that others of our faith have occupied."

"But how did you escape injury?" inquired Philip wonderingly.

"Escape injury? My body gives me pain with each move I make! I accounted for five of their number ere my good blade was broken—and the rest had their vengeance. We are both of us fortunate to be alive."

"What will they do with us?" said Philip.

"I see but three possibilities," was the cool reply. "Deportation, imprisonment, or the galleys. 'Tis scarcely a cheerful outlook."

Philip closed his eyes again. So badly did his head ache that the thought of what fate



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might have in store for them was of slight concern at the moment. Through his mind flitted vivid pictures—the great ship lying beside the wharf, his parents and sister going up the ladder, the long, silent street, the man with the black bandage, and Adair charging with drawn sword. Over and over again they passed before his eyes much in that order; and all the while his head ached and throbbed as if it would split.

He dozed off at last. When he awoke again, it was night and much of the pain had left his head; he was aware now of bruises on his back and shoulders, and the room was uncomfortably cold. He spoke to Adair, but the marquis did not rouse. Philip closed his eyes once more.

Early the following morning the two were wakened by the sound of voices outside the door; then the door opened, and Saint-Marly entered. Close behind him walked two of his armed dragoons, and right at their heels was the man with the black bandage. He carried a pan of stew, which he set down between the two captives.

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Saint-Marly stood in silence for several moments as if enjoying the sight of his helpless victims. Then addressing Adair, he said: "You are no doubt aware that there is a place known as the Tour de Constance, at Aigues-Mortes?"

Adair's lips curled under the sarcasm. "I have heard said," he replied, "that it is a prison from which escape is well-nigh impossible."

"You will both have the opportunity of determining that for yourselves," continued the officer. "At noon you will be prepared to march."

Adair's dark eyes flashed with anger, and in spite of his aching body he pushed himself upward to a sitting posture. "For myself I care not, nor do I protest at imprisonment!" he cried. "But I beg of you, consider this lad who has suffered so cruelly! At least give him the opportunity of recovering his strength ere you force him to march!"

Saint-Marly's fingers curled round his moustache, and he knit his brows as if in grave thought. "Perhaps," he said at last, "perhaps



you would both prefer deportation to America."

"Oh, we would!" cried Philip impulsively.

The lieutenant's pear-shaped face wrinkled with shrewd malice. "I do not doubt it," he replied dryly, casting a sharp glance at Adair. "She for whom you had the misfortune of crossing blades with me would perhaps be glad to see you again. But," he added facetiously, "I flatter myself I can play the role of protector rather better than the Marquis de Florac. It is not impossible that my duties will take me to Martinique ere long. I shall be glad to deliver any message you may have for her."

"Then tell her this!" exclaimed Adair. "Tell her that while the Marquis de Florac lives she may count upon him to avenge any insult or mistreatment that she or her family may receive at the hands of you or any other man!"

Saint-Marly's face became purple, and his under lip protruded in a way that was horrible. Philip, lying helpless on his back, expected every instant to see the officer leap upon his challenger; but with a mighty effort the lieutenant mastered his rage.



"Heroic words!" he retorted with a sneer. "Heroic words from a man who knows he is to spend the rest of his life in prison or in the galleys!" Then he turned and left the room, slamming the door heavily.

The two dragoons remained standing near the threshold. The man with the bandage seated himself on the floor near the window, observing, "Eat what is in the pan, or you will see it carried away, unemptied."

Adair helped Philip to sit up; then he pressed the food upon him, insisting that he eat more than half of it. When the boy had finished, the marquis raised the pan to his lips and drank what remained.

"That is poor fare, my friend," he remarked as the man with the bandage came to take the pan.

"Had I my way, I would poison every Huguenot in France!" was the savage retort. He glared at them with his one eye, then with a malicious twist of his mouth added, "It was I—Jacques le Rat—who betrayed you to the soldiers. You are not the first, nor yet the last." And aiming a kick at Philip and another

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at Adair, he passed into the hall, followed by the guards.

As the bolt fell into place, Adair murmured, "Louis the Magnificent! The Grand Monarch! The Sun King! And see the kind of men that are attracted to him—the flint-hearted Louvois, the unspeakable Marillac, the vile underling Saint-Marly and this one-eyed wretch who would be happy to poison us all. O Navarre! Does your great heart not throb with anguish as from on high you gaze down upon the land that you ruled so wisely and so well!"

The marquis relapsed into profound silence, his eyes half closed, his drawn face unutterably sad. At last, in an attempt to throw off his melancholy, he said, "Well, Philip, let us resume our broken rest. Noon is not far off, and we shall need all our strength."

At noon Saint-Marly and his soldiers entered the room again and roused the sleepers with kicks and proddings. Philip and Adair were so stiff and sore that they could hardly get to their feet. Urged roughly forward by the soldiers, they managed to descend a short, steep flight of stairs that led

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to the street, where three more dragoons were waiting.

After the semi-darkness of the room the full light of the noon-day sun was dazzling, painful. Gradually, as Philip's eyes became accustomed to it, he observed with a pang of pity the sorry condition of his friend. Adair's face was pale and dirt-stained, and his clothing torn and spotted from the struggle that had taken place the day before. Nor did Philip himself present a better appearance.

At a word from Saint-Marly two of the dragoons thrust the marquis forward and placed themselves on either side of him. Two others took their positions on either side of Philip; and the fifth, who appeared to be the leader of the detachment, went ahead side by side with the lieutenant. In that manner they proceeded westward along the quay, turning after a few minutes into a street that led uphill. Crowds of men, women and children gathered and followed them, jeering and gesticulating and reviling them with epithets coupled to the name of Huguenot. Thus, suffering untold agonies from stiff and bruised



and tired bodies, the two captives—whose sole offense was that they were of a different faith from the majority of Frenchmen—were conducted through the heart of Marseilles and out upon the northern borders of the city.

There Saint-Marly took his leave of them, after first giving specific instructions to the leader that he was to push on to Aigues-Mortes at the greatest possible speed.

Philip, in a swift backward glance, saw the lieutenant swaggering in the direction of a wine shop, his lace-trimmed hat jauntily on one side, his gay uniform brilliant in the sunlight.

The journey to Aigues-Mortes proved to be the worst torture Philip had ever endured. For the most part he walked with head bent, his eyes fixed on the monotonously moving legs of his friend, while the sun blazed down upon them and the dust from the road, mingled with the fetid odors of stagnant and plague-embittered ponds, filled eyes and ears and nostrils. Journeying across the vast arid waste that spread out round the mouths of the Rhone was like moving in a strange dead world—a

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world of far horizons, arching skies, wide areas of marshland and scum-covered salt ponds with dying, yellow reeds along the borders—a blighted, melancholy world without the song of birds, without the friendly sight of man, or animal.

On the evening of the second day the party crossed the river in a small boat that one of the soldiers, who had pushed on ahead, had procured from a fisherman of Arles. But the forced marching of those first two days had been too much for Philip's endurance; as the party were setting forth again, his legs gave way beneath him and he fell, unable to rise. In consequence they spent all of the next day beside the river, much to the disgust of the soldiers.

The following morning Philip was able to walk again, and two days later they came in sight of Aigues-Mortes, that medieval city of the "dead waters"—a vast parallelogram of crenelated, towered walls that stretched away on one side to a distance of almost a third of a mile. Heavy black clouds touched with the crimson of a dying sunset were massed

in the background, giving a doubly gloomy and forbidding aspect to the place. The party pushed on in silence, while Aigues-Mortes, like some strange dead city in a dead and dying world, loomed more vast, more sombre and forbidding with each step.

A lump came into Philip's throat, and he momentarily forgot the pains that wracked his body. A vision of his parents and Germaine rose before him, exiles on their way to slavery in an unknown land—and here was he, a boy of fourteen, about to enter this gloomy prison where in all probability he should end his days.

The voice of the leader broke in upon his thoughts: "It is not a pretty place, eh? Well, renounce the faith which the King abhors and you may both escape confinement."

Neither Philip nor Adair made reply, and with a shrug and a scowl the man quickened his pace, not pausing until the party were under the shadow of the heavy walls.



Chapter Six

PRISONERS IN THE TOWER

AS SOON as Philip and Adair were across the moat and inside the fortress, four of the prison guards conducted them without delay to the upper part of the Tower of Constance. There, in a large chamber dimly lighted by slits in the thick walls, they proceeded to search the prisoners.

"You will find nothing," Adair said to them.

"Eh, then! What is this?" exclaimed one of the guards as he opened Adair's neckband and caught sight of the leather pouch.

"It contains a keepsake—that is all."

"Bah! A feather!" cried the guard in disgust.

A few minutes later they led the captives through a low, arching stone passage to a large circular room where some twenty or more women and children were sitting or lying in various attitudes of utter dejection. Straight across the chamber the party pro-

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ceeded to a door opening upon a wooden staircase, up which they ascended forty-seven steps—Adair was careful to count them—to a small octagonal room in which an old man was sitting upon a stone bench beneath a square window. The guards thrust them forward and, retiring without a word, closed and barred the thick, iron-studded oak door.

The man on the bench regarded them with animal-like curiosity. His face was dark and wrinkled; his nose long and curved like the beak of a hawk; and the top of his head, which was quite bald, shone in the light like a piece of old parchment.

"You are Huguenots?" he said unexpectedly in a high, quavering voice. "Ah, so I thought, so I thought. You be not the first to share this room with old Simon during the past quarter of a century."

"A quarter of a century!" exclaimed Philip, horrified.

The old man nodded several times as if pleased with the effect he had caused. "'Tis not unpleasant when you become used to it." He paused abruptly and regarded them with

his deep-set eyes. "You are both young—and both desperate and energetic, eh?" he resumed. "That is why they put you up here with me."

He rose stiffly and with tottering steps went close to Adair. "Old Simon has good advice to give; he gives it to all who come here." And lowering his voice to the barest whisper, he said, "Think not of escape. 'Tis impossible, and in the end 'twill drive you mad—mad!"

"Why are you confined here, good Simon?" asked Adair.

A troubled look came into the wrinkled face, then vanished, leaving it serene. "For nothing," he replied. "At least I can remember naught, 'twas so long ago."

"Are you a Huguenot?" inquired Philip.

"Nay, lad. The Huguenots are accursed of God."

He tottered back to his bench, and the two friends began to inspect the room. It contained only the one window, heavily barred, from which there was a good view of the sombre marshes and the brilliantly blue sea stretching away to the south. The walls and floor

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were of rough stone worn smooth in places by the feet of unfortunates like old Simon. Beside the bench lay a quantity of straw. Adair's attention was attracted by a small door on one of the sides opposite the window, and he was moving toward it when the old man exclaimed with a cackling laugh:

"Ha! You think that door leads somewhere, eh? No, no. 'Tis but the door to a closet."

Adair ascertained the truth of his words, and after that he and Philip spread the straw and lay down upon it, thankful that they could rest and sleep after their arduous journey.

The first week the two friends spent in the tower was a period of rest and readjustment. They saw no one from outside except the guard who brought them food twice a day; they heard no sounds save those made within the confines of the cell.

At first the quiet and solitude were most welcome to Philip, but gradually with the passing days he became restless and irritable. The chatter of old Simon annoyed him, and sometimes even the friendship of Adair seemed

a source of irritation. Often of an evening the boy would be seized with a fit of black despair that would cause him to sit for hours at a time, his head bent, his lips tightly compressed. Adair talked perpetually of plans for escape, but Philip would not respond; such talk seemed futile, and he suspected his friend of taking a hopeful attitude merely for the sake of keeping him cheerful.

Finally, one day toward the end of the second month, Adair said unexpectedly, "Why don't you tell the guard you wish to recant?"

Philip's eyes flashed. "I will never do that!" he cried angrily.

"I did not expect it," replied Adair quietly. "Come now, Philip, we are too dull here. I propose to teach you English, which I know fairly well. One day, lad, we shall reach America, and there 'twill prove most useful. Let me give you your first lesson."

Philip entered only half-heartedly into the proposal, but before many days, thanks to Adair's unswerving enthusiasm, he began to take a real interest in the subject, and his fits of black despair became less frequent.

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On another occasion, several weeks later, Adair said, "Well, Philip, since we may remain here more years than I care to number, let us form a definite interest in something else, lest we become like poor Simon, whom long confinement has made a simpleton. Are you familiar with the game of chess? No? Then I will teach you."

"But we have no board, nor chessmen," protested Philip.

"I will make them," replied his companion, smiling.

Thereupon with the blunt point of his knife which the jailor had brought with the morning meal, he proceeded to trace a rough chess board upon the floor, scratching every other square to represent the black. Then he began to chip bits of stone from the walls and fashion them into crude pawns and other pieces. By the time the jailor came to take away the implements, Adair had made three pawns and a pair of bishops.

At the end of four days he had a complete set of chessmen.

Old Simon had from the start shown a



Philip's fits of despair became less frequent.



keen and childish interest, and he was content to sit for hours in profound silence while Adair taught the game to Philip.

One morning, when the two friends were about to begin play, the old man said, "Let me join you. I used to play long ago."

Philip yielded him his place, and then to the astonishment of Adair, old Simon began to move the pieces in a way that betokened a deep knowledge of the game.

Thereafter the three prisoners spent many hours each day over the chessboard—and Philip's fits of despair became still less frequent.

"Chess," observed Adair to Philip one evening when Simon was asleep, "is much like life. To be successful one must look far ahead, calculating his moves, taking advantage of unexpected situations. At present, Philip, we are at a disadvantage—but it is not check-mate."

The two friends had been at Aigues-Mortes almost nine months when Philip first noticed that Adair was acting in a peculiar and puzzling way. He discovered it one stormy night

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when, awakening suddenly, he reached forth his hand toward the place where his friend usually slept and, to his surprise, found it vacant. He groped about in the darkness and at last softly called him by name. At first there was no response, but a few moments later he heard Adair's footsteps on the floor, then his cheery voice:

"It is a bad night for sleep. I am restless."

That was the only explanation he gave.

Two nights later, and again on the night following, Philip had the same experience; and each time Adair gave no other explanation of his absence from the straw. Philip noticed, however, that his friend's interest in chess had diminished; often when Philip and old Simon were playing, Adair would sit silent and preoccupied.

Early one morning, while the old man was still asleep, Adair wakened Philip and in a calm voice announced, "I have discovered a way out of our prison."

"W-what!" gasped the boy.

Adair laughed softly. "You did not even suspect that my night prowlings might have

had this thing in view? Listen, Philip! In yonder closet there is the entrance to a staircase, which I discovered partly by accident, partly by—well, call it experience with such matters. In one of the upper chambers of the castle of my ancestors there existed just such a closet, built in every respect as this one is built; at one end there were four loose stones, which when removed formed the entrance to a staircase. The similarity of these two closets set me to thinking, and one day—do you remember?—old Simon was chattering about Saint Louis and his crusades, and he let fall the name, Boccanegra. Something stirred within me, and I had the strange feeling that one has when he is on the verge of an important revelation. I questioned Simon further about the man Boccanegra, and he said he was a Genoese, and that he it was who built this sombre pile we occupy. Of a sudden I knew why the name had roused my interest; often had I heard it on the lips of my grandsire. For it was a Genoese by the same name—doubtless the same man or his son or father—who

built my ancestral home back in the thirteenth century."

Old Simon stirred in his sleep, and Adair went on in a lower voice, "I examined the closet yonder inch by inch in the darkness, and you can well imagine my feelings when several of the stones at one end moved slightly under the pressure of my hands. Well, Philip, to be brief, there exists yonder a staircase that in all likelihood is unknown to anyone here at Aigues-Mortes. It leads to a door, which I am satisfied, from calculations I have made, opens upon a space flush with the top of the wall. The door is locked, but the key is on the inside and—"

"Oh!" exclaimed Philip, trembling, "Then there is a chance of freedom."

"Yes, a chance," replied Adair gravely. "But we have old Simon to consider. I would not leave him here, even though he considers those of our faith 'accursed of God.' Yet I somehow feel that he will not wish to leave this place which has been his home for so many years. At a propitious time I will question him, taking care to betray naught of our

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secret, lest he might babble when the guard is present."

Adair's views regarding the old man were justified. When he talked to him of escape, old Simon only chuckled in childish fashion. Escape was not for him; he was content with his lot. And when Adair asked him whether he would be sorry if they were to leave him, the old man replied soberly, "Sorry? Yes, for you brought back to me the game of chess, which I love. But," he added, "if you go, they will send others here—and old Simon will teach them the game."

During the next few days the two friends discussed the details of the great venture. Adair pointed out that, once upon the wall, they should have to leap into the moat thirty feet below, swim to the bank and then proceed as rapidly as possible toward the sea, remaining there in hopes of being picked up by an outgoing vessel.

Late one evening, following a dreary three days of heavy rains, Adair and Philip rose softly and, after ascertaining that their fellow prisoner was sleeping soundly, tip-toed across

the chamber to the door of the closet, which they entered, closing the door carefully behind them. Adair removed the stones one by one and then, with a word to his companion to follow, stepped into the opening.

Philip's hands were like ice as he cautiously descended the narrow stairway. He could smell the ooze that covered the walls, and frequently he barely avoided a fall on the moist stones beneath his feet. Down, down he went what seemed an interminable distance until at last his body encountered Adair's outstretched hand.

"Now, Philip, courage while I struggle with the door."

Scarcely daring to take a deep breath, Philip leaned against the side of the passage, trembling in every limb. He could hear his companion grunt as he sought to turn the key in the lock. At last it yielded with a loud click. There was a long pause; then he heard the creak of rusty hinges and felt a rush of cool air in his face. A few seconds later they were on the wall.

The rain had ceased; groups of faint stars



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were visible here and there overhead; and a cold and boisterous wind was blowing full against their faces, whistling through the slits along the wall, roaring round the corners of the black tower at their right.

"We are fortunate to have such a wind," whispered Adair. "Twill smother the splash when we leap. And remember, lad, when you leap, let it be far out into space. Now I first. Count ten very slowly, then follow."

Philip felt the pressure of Adair's strong hand upon his own. A moment later the marquis was gone.

With fast-beating heart Philip stepped cautiously to the edge of the rampart. The wind thrust him backward. He stepped forward again and began to count the seconds. One—two—three— A faint sound like that of a splash floated up from the moat. Four—five— A dog began to howl in the streets of the town. Philip shuddered. Six—seven— A sudden rush of wind flattened him against the tower; it took his breath away and seemed to rob him of all his courage.

By the time the wind slackened he felt as



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if he had been standing there for hours, and that he never should be able to leap. Suddenly his heart tightened, and with hands pressed flat against the tower, he turned his head and peered into the darkness. Someone was approaching along the rampart! He could hear the footsteps with horrible clearness. Louder and louder they became. Still he hesitated, hoping the person—one of the guards doubtless—would turn back before he reached the tower.

Nearer and nearer came the footsteps, and just as Philip was preparing to hurl himself blindly into space, they halted. He could see the guard now, a vague black shape less than five yards from the corner of the tower. Philip's face was moist with cold sweat; his hands were icy. What should he do? If he should leap, the guard would surely hear him and raise the alarm.

He waited, hoping the man would soon turn and move back whence he had come. But the guard did not turn; he remained standing there, shifting now to one foot, now to the other. And then at last, with musket slanted



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over his shoulder, he began to stride leisurely toward the tower! Even then Philip could not bring himself to the point of leaping. Pressed tight against the stonework, he clung to the hope that the guard might not notice him in the darkness.

Onward the man came, humming a little tune. Suddenly the sound died on his lips, and he stopped short. The musket swung quickly down from his shoulder—and at that instant Philip hurled himself upon him.

The guard staggered backwards under the fierce impact of the blow. His weapon slipped from his hands and clattered to the stones. Philip heard him grunt, felt himself seized round the waist, and then the two fell heavily, the guard underneath. In a flash Philip's hands closed upon his adversary's white upturned throat. Almost at the same instant the guard drew his legs up and straightened them with such force that Philip shot upward and sidewise to the very edge of the wall. The breath was knocked from his body. For a second or two he wavered there, gasping and clawing with hands and feet at the

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stone-work to keep from going over the edge.

The guard scrambled to his knees, and raising his voice in a shout of fury, made a lunge at the boy. One big hand thudded against Philip's shoulder just as he was trying to rise. The blow sent him off his balance, and for a horrible instant he waved his arms wildly in a vain effort to keep from falling. Then he plunged outward, headlong into space. He was aware of a raucous, bellowing voice above him. Then came a loud singing in his ears. All about him was black night, and he had a terrifying sense of almost unbearable lightness. Down, down he seemed to be flying against a fierce uprushing wind.

After what seemed many minutes, he struck the water with a great smack and splash, and then again he had the feeling of almost unbearable lightness, accompanied now with a sense of chilling cold. His feet touched something hard; he pushed upward, and presently he was gasping and sputtering on the surface of the moat. A hand closed on his



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shoulder, and he heard Adair's voice: "This way, lad—make haste!"

Side by side the two swam to the bank and crawled out upon the reeds and grasses. Then without a sound they rose and, half-running, half-scrambling, set off toward the southwest. Confused shouts rose behind them, accompanied by the howl and barking of dogs. A light flashed upon the west wall of Aigues-Mortes and began to move swiftly the length of it, as if someone were running with a torch.

"Faster!" cried Adair, and the two friends plunged ahead in the darkness, stumbling over ruts and stones, frequently going to their knees in hidden pools of stagnant water.

And all the while fresh sounds rose behind them, and more lights began to gleam on the walls of the prison. The deep tones of a bell trembled across the waste land, sending a chill of terror to Philip's heart. With that bell pealing forth its signal of prisoners escaped, it seemed to him, for the instant, futile to attempt to fly. Yet onward he ran, keeping as close behind Adair as possible. Once they paused to make sure of their bearings; and before



they set off again Philip told of his encounter on the rampart. Adair grunted but made no comment.

At the end of perhaps an hour of running a faint glow appeared far off to their left, and before many minutes the silver rim of a full moon rose over the distant horizon. They pushed onward until they reached a low sandy promontory that jutted far out into the sea. By that time the moon was completely above the horizon, casting a long ladder of light that danced and trembled upon the water.

The fugitives knelt upon the sand and gazed back in the direction of Aigues-Mortes. Here and there on the waste land, yellow lights were moving and fluttering like will-o'-the-wisps—torches in the hands of the soldiers who were searching for them. Brighter and brighter they seemed to burn. The two friends could hear their pursuers shouting to one another; and now and then the loud baying of a hound reached their ears.

"Philip," said Adair gravely, "I like not

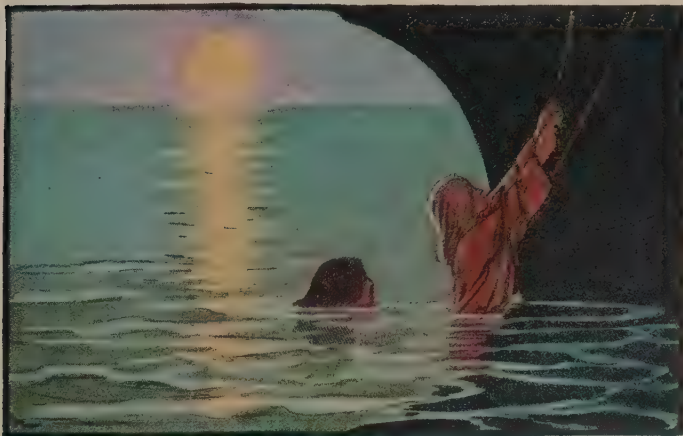
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the look of things. Yonder torches are spreading out on either side. Whichever way we move, up the shore or down, we run the risk of their closing in upon us."

"Oh," groaned Philip, "if it had not been for the guard back there on the wall, we should have got safe away, and no one the wiser till morning!"

"Do not blame yourself, lad. I should have acted as you did, I am sure. But come, we cannot remain here. Let us make for the west, since there are fewer lights in that direction."

They rose and were about to set forth,





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when Adair uttered a low exclamation and pointed toward the water. Out of the darkness at one side a long black object was moving slowly into the path of silver.

"What is it?" murmured Philip wonderingly.

And then suddenly he understood. The dark object was the hull of a vessel. As they watched, it swung completely across the lighted pathway—a great ship with high bows and towering masts—and then vanished in the darkness beyond.

"Philip!" cried Adair in a voice of suppressed excitement. "Have you courage and strength for a long swim? If so, we may win safety! Yonder ship is at anchor—see, 'tis beginning to swing back again!"

"But supposing it is French?" Philip protested anxiously.

"We must risk that," replied Adair. "For me anything is better than to be carried back to Aigues-Mortes."

"And for me also!"

Philip strode into the water, and Adair followed him. They waded for perhaps a score of yards until the water was almost to



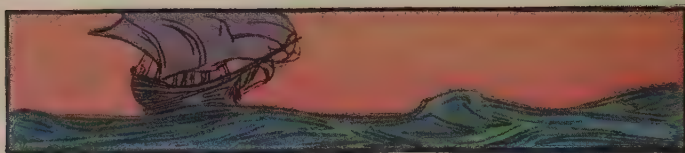
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their waists; then they plunged forward and began to swim. Happily both were strong swimmers, and with Philip slightly in advance, they made swift progress toward the dark hull of the vessel, taking care to splash as little as possible.

After a quarter of an hour they could distinguish the vessel plainly and occasionally could hear the voice of the watch. In less than half an hour from the time they had left the shore they were under the broad stern, clinging to one of several trailing ropes.

They could hear the watch directly above them now, pacing slowly back and forth. At last his footsteps grew fainter; and when they could no longer hear them, Adair said, "Now up you go—and then hide wherever possible."

Philip drew himself up the rope and, grasping the rail, scrambled over the side. A piece of canvas was lying upon a row of kegs, and lifting the edge, he crept beneath it. A few seconds later Adair was beside him.



Chapter Seven

ON THE ATLANTIC

ALL night the fugitives lay shivering beneath the canvas, dozing off only to rouse and doze off again; and all the while the deep-throated alarm bell at the prison continued to toll at intervals.

Morning dawned, and Philip and Adair listened with fast-beating hearts to the activity beginning aboard the vessel—the hoarse shouts of the crew, the groaning of a windlass, the shrill complaint of blocks, then a sudden loud smacking followed at once by a swift lurch of the deck.

“Ha!” exclaimed Adair in an exultant whisper. “I know the meaning of that! They are raising sail, and soon we shall be moving. But, lad, there seems no doubt as to the nationality of this vessel. Those voices are the voices of Frenchmen.”

Philip cautiously lifted the edge of the canvas a scant inch and tried to peer forth, but the bright flooding sunlight blinded him.



"Dogs!" he roared. "Dogs and Huguenots!"



"Oh!" he murmured as a sudden thought came to him. "What if this vessel should be bound for Marseilles or —"

"Have no misgivings," replied his companion. "I caught a phrase but a few moments ago; we are outward bound. This good vessel took on several prisoners from Aigues-Mortes early yestereve. My greatest anxiety is lest we be discovered during the next half-hour and returned to our cell; for yonder sonorous bell has told only too plainly the story of prisoners escaped."

Thereafter the two friends remained silent for a long time until at last they were satisfied that the vessel was fully under way. Then with a feeling of relief Philip closed his eyes, and before many minutes he was asleep.

He roused with a violent start and for a few moments could hardly remember where he was, so brilliant was the sunlight and so loud and confused were the voices all about him. A pair of rough hands seized him and jerked him to his feet, and only then did he realize what had happened. They were discovered!

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On the deck a few feet from him stood Adair between two stalwart seamen who were holding his arms at his sides. An angry-faced, black-moustached little man in a Basque cap was shaking his fist under the nose of the marquis and talking so fast that it was almost impossible to understand him.

"Dogs!" he roared. "Dogs and Huguenots! And you even have the face to admit it—to me, Captain Saure of His Majesty's ship, *La Concorde*!" He thumped his chest angrily and glanced from one to another of the sailors and officers gathered about. "Dogs!" he repeated. "Had I my way I would ship you both back to the *Tour de Constance*—yes, or I would consign you to the galleys! To the galleys, do you hear? To the galleys for life!" He glared first at Adair, then at Philip.

"But I cannot turn back now," he resumed with a glance at the distant shore line. "And I know the galleys are full—thanks to the swarm of other heretics who deem themselves too good for the King's faith." He ground his teeth and again shook his fist under Adair's nose. "You will suffer!" he



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thundered. "While you are on my ship you will suffer with the rest of the dogs in yonder cabin! You chose badly when you chose to swim out to my ship! When we reach Martinique, I will take it upon myself to turn you over with them to the planters, who will teach you the meaning of the word slavery! Now take them out of my sight!" he roared at the seamen who were holding the captives.

With vile words and brutal blows Philip and Adair were conducted to a small cabin amidships and thrust inside. The cabin was intended to hold perhaps eight persons, but more than twenty occupied it—men and women and three or four small children. A tall, gray-haired man pushed his way forward.

"God is good to us," he said reverently. "He sends us two more who are resolute in the faith we love—two strong young men," he added, "who will aid us by their presence alone. But how came you aboard at so late an hour?"

Adair briefly told the story of their trials and escape, concluding with a slight smile, "We chose a vessel scarcely to our liking,



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but we are content to be here." And Philip added, "What sorrows we may meet in the New World cannot be worse than those we have already met in the Old."

"Those are words of courage!" said the gray-haired man. "'Tis the view we all hold."

That day marked the beginning of fresh trials, fresh hardships for the two friends—and for those others who occupied the small cabin with them. In a sense it was the dragonades again. Being forced to occupy so confined a space was sufficient cruelty in itself; but there were other cruelties. The food they received was of a sort that dogs might have shunned. Recriminations and sometimes blows were inflicted upon them. They were mocked, insulted, spat upon. In cold weather orders were issued that the door of the cabin be wedged open, and now and again a passing seaman would empty a bucket of icy salt water in the doorway, taking a keen delight in the discomfiture he caused. When the weather was bad, the seamen had fewer opportunities to annoy them; but then the



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prisoners suffered from the cold and the spray and the violent rolling of the deck beneath their feet.

Yet during the six long months that the ship required for the crossing, although four died from fatigue and exposure, not one of the valiant band lost that fortitude which in the past had held them firm in a faith that was reviled throughout France. And often of an evening, or during a storm that threatened to stand the Concorde on her beam ends, it was not uncommon for the Huguenots, under the leadership of the gray-haired man, to raise their voices in one of the psalms of Theodore Beza or Clement Marot. In those manifestations of an undying faith Philip and Adair always joined, the rich voice of the marquis soaring above all the others.

Hard though their lot was, both the friends felt a lightness of spirit that they could not conceal. They had escaped life-long captivity and service in the galleys, and they were bound for a land that, hostile and savage though it might prove to be, held the only people who were dear to them. Adair had

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heard so much from Philip concerning his family that the young noble had come to regard them almost as his own kin.

On one occasion he surprised Philip by a remark that the boy did not comprehend in its full significance until many months later. The marquis was standing beside the open door one day, after they had been at sea almost five months, gazing pensively off across the rolling blue waters.

"What is it you see out there that is so interesting?" inquired Philip.

Without moving his gaze, Adair replied, "I see a pair of dark eyes beneath long lashes, and a curving mouth very much like your own, Philip." And then with a quick smile and a tap at his throat, "We have gone through much, lad, but we still have the white plume." He suddenly drew it forth and, turning toward the other prisoners, announced in a ringing voice:

"My friends, I hold here a relic that should be sacred to all of our faith. It is part of the plume that once adorned the helmet of Henry of Navarre!"

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Philip, viewing the pale, drawn faces, beheld a sudden brightening of dull eyes; and then the gray-haired leader exclaimed, "Ah, my friends, what a happy omen! Let it be our guide, our symbol! Let no one despair!" And the next moment, as if urged by a common impulse, the whole company burst into song.

The Concorde continued to plow her way steadily westward, and at last one warm bright morning early in March a cry rose from several of the crew, and Philip, crowding with the rest of the prisoners toward the doorway, saw a long, low pencil of land on the distant horizon.

"Adair, it is Martinique!" he exclaimed.

"We shall soon see," was the reply. "Meanwhile a word of counsel. Thus far, Philip, we have been fortunate in not being separated from each other. It seems too much to hope that we shall be assigned to the same master on yonder island. But no matter how far apart we may be, our one thought must be to escape and join forces."

Gradually the outline of the island became



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clearer; and before long they could distinguish against the sky the sharp summits of mountains rising from a mass of green foliage. Then as the little vessel drew still nearer, they perceived graceful tufted palm trees along a white shore that stretched away and away like a ribbon of silver.

The *Concorde* rounded the southern point, proceeded slowly up the coast and at the end of perhaps two hours turned her prow north-east and began to nose her way into a broad bay on the upper side of which gleamed the roofs and spires of a small village lying at the base of a massive, verdure-clad range of mountains. This was Fort de France, glittering and colorful, the capital of Martinique; and in a very few minutes the band of noble-hearted sufferers in the cabin were aware that their journey was at an end.

It was mid-afternoon when the *Concorde* dropped anchor close to Fort Saint Louis in front of the city—a hot, flaming tropical afternoon with scarcely a breath of air to stir the quiet surface of the bay. As a final vindictive measure the captain ordered the cabin door



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closed and locked, and for five long, terrible hours the captives suffered from heat and thirst. Not until the sun had lost most of its power was the door opened; and then two seamen entered and, singling out Philip and Adair and the gray-haired leader, led them to where the captain was standing, hands on hips, beside the rail.

With a gleam of malice in his eyes he said to Adair: "Well, my fine fellow, I promised that you would suffer. Have I kept my word?"

"I think there can be no doubt of that," replied the marquis.

The captain spat into the water. "It is nothing to what you will have to endure from now on. Some of the island planters are more lenient toward heretics than the King desires; I shall see to it that you three are assigned to masters worthy of you."

A few minutes later the three prisoners were led out upon the quay and marched up the principal street to a low house of white stone. There on a bench outside the door the guards made them sit down while one of their number went inside.

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They had been sitting there only a few minutes when Philip called Adair's attention to a man who was approaching them from the direction of the waterfront. He was dressed in dark gray with a broad, discolored orange sash round his waist, and one eye was covered by a black bandage.

"Aha!" murmured Adair in surprise. "It is our friend the Rat, who brought us to grief at Marseilles. Strange he should be here—and yet possibly not so strange after all. Likely enough Saint-Marly also is here."

The man with the bandage caught sight of them a long way off and quickened his pace. They could see the malice in his solitary eye, the nervous twitching of his brown fingers. He stopped in front of them and with a snarl that distorted his face observed:

"So they sent you here, eh?"

"It looks that way," replied Adair dryly. "And you might remind Saint-Marly of the promise I made him at Marseilles."

"He is not at Martinique," was the short reply.

"Then Martinique is not so bad as I thought," observed Adair with irritating coolness.

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At that point the guard who had entered the house came out again in company with a large-headed, brawny, sun-browed man almost as dark as some of the blacks the prisoners had noticed in the street and along the quay. With great hairy arms crossed on his broad chest, he stood in front of the three Huguenots, studying them with a pair of bold dark eyes.

"Well, Pierre, which one shall it be?" inquired one of the guards at last.

The big man's gaze roved from Philip to Adair, then back to Philip. "I will take the boy," he said in a heavy voice. "I like not the look of the others. Come, follow me—at once!" he thundered as Philip hesitated.

There was so much force and brutality in the way he spoke the final words that Philip sprang to his feet and, casting a backward look of farewell toward Adair, set off up the street with the man who was to be his master for so many cruel, heart-breaking weeks.

Once they were out of the city, the big man—Black Pierre, as he was known throughout the island—drew a snake-like whip from



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beneath the folds of his shirt, observing as he did so, "Take care that you do not provoke me. I am short-tempered, and my hand is heavy. With the butt of this whip I have killed four men in my time, and I have not yet reached my forty-fifth year. You have been warned."

Philip made no reply, but quickened his steps; and with Black Pierre a few paces behind him, the two made their way over the hot, dusty road in the deepening twilight. Fields soon began to open up before them—fields of sugar cane and cotton and tobacco, all of which were strange to the boy.

At the end of almost two hours of steady walking they reached a clearing at the base of an over-hanging ledge of vine-covered rock, where three low buildings stood close together. As they struck off into a lane that led toward them Philip could hear the sound of soft, nasal voices, and presently he caught sight of dark figures gathered about the doorways. Black Pierre halted before the door of the largest house and raised his voice. Instantly a swarthy man in a dirty white suit stepped outside, and a low, brief conversation followed



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between the two. Then, ordering Philip into the house, the planter strode away.

The room Philip entered was large and warm and quite dark, but by the odor and the sound of breathing he knew that a large number of men occupied it—most of them asleep or resting.

Never in his life had Philip felt so lonely and so miserable. Where were his parents and his sister? Had they survived the long and terrible voyage across the Atlantic? If so, had they been separated and sent to cruel, heavy-handed masters like Black Pierre? Oh, should he never see them again! And what of Adair—noble-hearted, courageous Adair? What had become of him?

Thoughts like those passed back and forth in his mind until at last, worn out with sorrow and anxiety, his eyes closed and he fell into a troubled, fitful sleep.



Chapter Eight

BLACK PIERRE OF MARTINIQUE

PHILIP began his new duties with a desire to please that might have touched the heart of a less brutal master than Black Pierre. Besides the boy, there were only half a dozen pure-blooded Frenchmen on the plantation; these were all engagés, men who for one reason or another had voluntarily bound themselves as slaves for a period of three years. The rest of the workers were negroes from Africa. Philip found his companions for the most part kindly and simple, and during the long weeks that followed he formed a sincere affection for some of the negroes.

But the work exacted by Black Pierre and his Creole foremen was the hardest the boy had ever known. At an early hour each day the men were in the fields, caring for the cotton plants, cutting the heavy stalks of the sugar cane, or performing various other arduous tasks. Except for a short period when the sun was hottest, they were in the fields all day

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long, returning to the shacks at evening, weary and exhausted. After a brief meal they sought the rest they so badly needed, only to rise before dawn the next morning and begin again their hard labors. Nor did Philip, eager though he was to please, escape the whip that the planter always carried with him. During the first few weeks a mismanaged bit of loading, a few stalks of cane severed too high from the ground, or an unguarded moment of idleness was sufficient to bring the hissing lash down upon his aching shoulders. It was by such methods that Black Pierre had earned his reputation of being the most brutal planter in Martinique; and it was by such methods, too, that his plantation had become the most productive on the island.

Yet in spite of the hardships he suffered, Philip gained in physical strength. At the end of the sixth or seventh week he was almost as brown as the foremen; his shoulders broadened, the muscles of his arms and legs hardened, and he had acquired a look in his eyes that betokened approaching manhood. Less and less frequently did the planter use his



"Philip! At last we meet again!"

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whip upon the boy, in part because of his greater dexterity at the work, in part, too—although Philip did not realize it—because of that look which had come into his eyes.

During all this time Philip had heard not the slightest news concerning his family or Adair. He was not permitted to go to the city on any matter whatsoever, and he had no opportunity of talking with the few visitors who came to the plantation. Nor did any chance of escape present itself. The days and weeks crept by with monotonous regularity. June came, and the rainy season began; the winds, which had been blowing from the east, varied to south and were warm and damp.

One afternoon in mid-September, toward the end of the rainy season, Philip was near the northern border of the plantation, at work upon a piece of bad road that the heavy rains of August had damaged. For three hours he had been sweating with pick and shovel, until at last, unable to continue the work longer without resting, he sat down upon a shelving bank, screened from the other workers by a patch of brake. An overpowering



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desire to stretch out on the ground came over him. For some time he fought the feeling, but finally he was on the point of yielding to it, when he heard his name pronounced in a voice that caused his heart to leap, and turning his head swiftly, he beheld Adair on hands and knees in the brake behind him.

"Philip! At last we meet again!"

"Adair!" cried the boy, reaching out to clasp the hand of his friend.

The white teeth of the marquis flashed in the sunlight. "Lad, how brown you are! And how you've broadened out!"

"And you—I hardly recognized you! You are darker than any Creole! And your clothes—"

"Say naught as to my clothes; they are disgraceful! But listen, Philip. I have good news for you and a long story, which I must tell briefly." With a hasty glance through the brake in the direction of the other workers, he resumed in a crisp, animated voice:

"First your family—they are safe, all three of them on the island of Marie Galante, off Guadeloupe, far to the north of Martinique.



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Saint-Marly and the Rat—who is now his personal servant—are there also, and I make no doubt our plum-colored friend loses no opportunity to force his unwelcome presence upon your sister. But they are safe and well and reasonably free from hardships. That is the main thing."

"Oh, how did you learn all this!" cried Philip, unable to keep the tears from his eyes.

Another glance backward through the brake and Adair continued: "All these months I have been working like a veritable dog on the plantation adjoining this one. Several times I have managed to stray as far as this in hopes of seeing you, but fortune did not favor me; you were always elsewhere—except on one occasion when I caught sight of you from a distance. I have learned many things, lad, and my mind being of a restless sort, I have kept it at work on plans for escape. There is an English vessel at Fort de France—a brig, as 'tis called, from the colonies in North America. I saw it but yesterday when I had occasion to go to the city with a consignment of tobacco. A fine craft it is! And this morn-



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ing the captain came on business to our plantation. He was a man to handle such a craft, or I am no judge of character—a tall, broad, middle-aged giant with bushy whiskers, heavy brows and eyes as blue as steel—but kindly eyes, yes, kindly eyes, Philip!”

Adair paused to draw his sleeves across his moist forehead. “I never saw a man I was so sure of! We spoke not a word to each other—there was no chance for that—but we exchanged glances, and explain it how you will, I know that he read the contents of my mind and approved!”

“But how can we hope to reach his ship?” asked Philip in a trembling, eager voice.

“You must contrive to go to Fort de France somehow ’twixt now and the following evening, and I will do the same,” replied Adair. “Everyone sleeps heavily—”

He broke off abruptly at the sound of heavy crashing in the brake, and with a terrified glance over his shoulder Philip beheld Black Pierre, whip in hand, striding toward them, his dark face distorted with rage. Before either of the friends could rise, the whip

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hissed downward, curling round Adair's shoulders.

Hardly knowing what he did, Philip sprang to his feet and caught up the shovel he had been using; and just as the planter was raising his arm to strike again, the boy leaped forward and brought the implement down flatwise with all his strength upon the man's lowered head. Black Pierre dropped to the ground. His legs quivered; his fingers twitched. Then his whole body became rigid.

"Ventre Saint Gris!" cried Adair, uttering the favorite exclamation of Henry IV. "Lad, you have taught him something! Now we must fly!" And he set off at top speed across the adjoining plantation, closely followed by Philip.

Two of the foremen were already running toward the brake, calling to several of the blacks to follow. In a swift backward glance Philip saw the planter on his knees. The sight lent speed to his legs, and in a wild spurt he passed Adair.

Thus together they ran across the soggy, uneven ground, heading for the shoulder of a

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mountain a quarter of a league distant. Philip knew they were gaining on their pursuers, but he did not slacken speed; he was filled with a wild sense of exultation, of freedom! Only when they reached the sloping base of the shoulder did he relax into an uneven, scrambling dog-trot that carried him swiftly up toward the dense tangle of growth that fringed the top.

"Easy, lad!" gasped Adair. "We are clear of them for the present. See, they have halted."

Up, up the slope the two friends scrambled until they were in the midst of close-growing trees and twining vines. The top formed a long, tortuous ridge that ran roughly north-west; they followed it as best they could through the jungle until it sloped gently downward to a narrow valley filled with a rank growth that forced them to a slow walk. Reaching the opposite slope at last, they pushed onward up the hill and into a damp and gloomy wood. Birds of every variety of plumage chattered and whirred overhead and on both sides. Flaming orchids and other

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gay-colored plants shone like jewels in the slanting yellow rays that penetrated the network of green.

The sun sank out of sight, and still the fugitives pushed onward, striving to put as much distance as possible between them and the plantations before darkness set in. The forest became darker and darker, until at last they were forced to halt in a small natural clearing, unable to go farther.

Adair seated himself upon a rock and mopped the sweat from his face. "Philip," he said with a slight smile, "of what good were all my fine plans for escape?"

"We have escaped without plans!" replied his companion, dropping upon the ground. "Let us rest."

But before long the moon appeared off to the right—a full tropical moon that turned the jungle into a maze of black and silver, marking the ground with eerie patterns; and unwilling to risk even the slightest chance of being overtaken, the two rose at last and pushed onward once more, threading their way in and out among the glistening tree



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trunks. At the end of perhaps three hours they lay down upon a broad sloping rock, and soon both were asleep.

Early the following morning they again pressed forward, and now, so strange are the ways of fate, Philip was thankful for the long weeks of toil that had toughened his body, enabling him to withstand the hardships of just such a journey. It seemed to him, as they pushed steadily northward, as if he were in a vast, far-stretching world of deep valleys and leaping, foaming cataracts, of dark, enveloping forests wherein graceful ferns grew like trees, and strange birds chattered and called and whistled, and venomous serpents glided among the underbrush. Both he and Adair were familiar with the deadly fer-de-lance, a snake dreaded by all natives of the island, and they were constantly on the watch for it.

That morning they made a meal of bananas and wild plums. They felt no anxiety over food; everywhere they came upon the familiar breadfruit tree, and melons and grapes were to be found on nearly every sunny slope.

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The thing that concerned them most was how they should get off the island. Adair had gleaned the information that the island of Dominica, under British rule, lay only a short distance to the north, but how they were to reach it was a question neither could answer.

Toward the middle of the fourth day they came within sight of a high mountain off to the left, with a cone-shaped summit half hidden in pale gray vapor, and Adair observed, "That, I think, is Mount Pelee, of which I have heard the blacks speak. If so, the town of Saint Pierre lies yonder at the base, and we had best vary our direction."

Accordingly they began to veer more to the east, and the following day, in a driving, beating rain, they came to a small river, which they followed until it broadened out to meet the sea. They stood for some time on a rocky slope, gazing off to the east, and presently, as the rain slackened, they could distinguish the ocean, wonderfully blue and lighted here and there by rays of sunlight shooting out from behind a broken patch of cloud.



"Yonder," observed Adair solemnly, "lies our native France. Will the day come, I wonder, when we may all return?"

They descended to the wide river mouth, glad to exchange the soggy floor of the jungle for the gleaming white sand of the beach. Adair had another motive: he said there were sure to be shell fish, which they could procure without much difficulty. As it happened, the tide was low, and before many minutes they had a quantity of good-sized oysters heaped in front of them in the sand.

"We must eat them raw, I suppose," observed Adair, breaking open a large one with a stone. "See, Philip, it does not look appetizing, but I wager—"

He broke off suddenly and with thumb and forefinger plucked at something within the shell. "Philip, look here," he said, holding up a smooth object about the size and shape of a pea. "What think you of this?"

"It is very pretty," replied Philip.

"Pretty? Ah, lad, 'tis plain to see you never were at the Court of Louis XIV. Pretty? Why, lad, this is a pearl, and a handsome one! I



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am not a lapidary, but if I mistake not, this pearl is of great worth." He broke into a merry laugh, exclaiming, "What irony, Philip, to come upon a pearl when we would give all we possess for a boat! But we shall keep it—and let us see if perchance there are others in that heap."

He began to open some of the larger shells, now and then pausing to swallow the meat of an oyster or to pass one to Philip. Only two other oysters contained pearls, and they were both much smaller than the first; but they served to stimulate the friends to a further search of the flats, and before the incoming tide drove them up the bank they had succeeded in finding another, almost as large as the first. Adair placed them all in the bag at his throat, which he had managed to keep through all vicissitudes.

"They look well beside the white plume," he remarked, smiling.

That evening they slept in the sand, and the following day they began a fresh search for pearls. But all their efforts were in vain, and somewhat crestfallen, Adair proposed that

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they push on up the coast, keeping a sharp watch for any vessel that might pass. "There must be friendly boats passing this way now and then," he remarked hopefully.

Late one afternoon when they were studying the sea from the top of a jutting headland, Philip observed, "Why could we not build a rough craft of some sort? It might take us many days, even weeks, but I am sure we could do it."

Adair made no reply, but remained sitting motionless, his hand resting on his chin, his gaze fixed on the horizon to the southeast.

"There is plenty of dead wood hereabouts," continued Philip. "We could assemble a number of logs and lash them together with vines."

As Adair still showed no interest, Philip turned to him with a questioning look. Without removing his gaze from the horizon, the young noble observed in a quiet voice, "Before you talk of building a boat, glance yonder and tell me what you see. To my eyes it looks like a sail."

Philip squinted in the direction indicated;

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then with a cry he sprang to his feet. "It is a sail! And it is coming this way!"

For a long time the two friends watched while the vessel gradually gained in size. Slowly it moved up the coast, and to Philip, scrutinizing every detail of the white billowing sails, it seemed like some graceful water bird. Before long it was near enough for them to distinguish the outlines of the hull, then the lower rigging.

"It is moving with fair speed," observed Adair. "See the white wave it throws up 'neath the bow. And, Philip, it is a brig, with two masts and sails rigged square across, like the vessel I saw at Fort de France. Yes, it is enough like it to be—" His voice trailed off into silence broken only now and then by a word or two spoken half aloud, half to himself.

Meanwhile Philip had removed his shirt and was standing on the highest part of the headland, eager to signal the vessel, held back only by the thought that it might be French. Half an hour passed, and the brig had approached to within a league's distance.

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Suddenly Adair strode to his friend's side. "Philip," he said in a trembling voice, "I am sure of it now! Yonder brig is the one I saw at Fort de France. She is English, lad, English! And she must not pass us!"

In a moment Philip was on the shoulders of the marquis, waving the shirt wildly about his head. Northward the vessel moved with its multitude of square sails puffed outward in the wind. Now it was even with the headland, now it had passed beyond.

"Oh!" cried Philip, redoubling his efforts. "They do not see us! They will not stop."

Farther and farther the vessel continued to glide northward, until it seemed as if Philip had spoken the truth; and then suddenly two of the upper sails fluttered in the wind, and Adair shouted:

"They have caught our signal!"

A few minutes later, as other sails were fluttering and lowering toward the deck, Philip and Adair saw a small boat put off over the side and, under the urge of three pairs of oars, set a course straight for them.



Philip drew a rough plan of the island.



Chapter Nine

A CHALLENGE

THE two fugitives were on the beach when the small boat nosed its way into an inlet and dug its prow into the soft sand. There were six men at the oars, all of them well built with sun-browned faces and blue eyes; a seventh was seated in the stern, and it was with a feeling of joyous exultation that Philip recognized him as the man whom Adair had described.

"Ho!" cried the captain, addressing Adair, "So it is you, eh? I had a notion it might be, after I'd heard ye took French leave o' the plantation. So I ordered a sharp lookout. Egad! I knew ye was the kind to do it sooner or later first I set eyes on ye. And this lad? But scramble aboard and we'll talk while my men row us back to the Martha Dell."

Philip, sitting beside the captain in the stern, could hardly refrain from breaking into song. He marvelled at the matter-of-fact way Adair, on the other side of the captain, told

of their adventures; and the responses of the Englishman thrilled him by their vigor. The conversation between the two was mostly in English—and Philip was thankful for his long weeks of study at Aigues-Mortes.

The captain's shaggy blond brows came together in a scowl. So that was how the French government treated white folks on the plantations, was it! Well, he didn't wonder that many had tried to escape at the risk of their lives. And the King of France sent law-abiding, loyal subjects across the sea into slavery just because they wouldn't attend the church he attended!

"Egad!" he exclaimed. "I'd heard many stories of persecutions in France, but until I reached Martinique and talked to Frenchmen first-hand, I confess I didn't believe more'n half of 'em. I am a native of Massachusetts Bay, son of a father and mother who crossed the Atlantic so they might worship accordin' to their conscience—and, by heaven, it makes my blood boil to hear what you've just told me!"

He turned to Philip. "And you've got a mother and a father and sister over here, and



you ain't seen 'em for two years? Whereabouts are they?"

"On the island of Marie Galante, so I have heard," replied Philip. In spite of himself his voice trembled with emotion.

The captain brought his fist heavily against the palm of his hand. "By heaven!" he cried. "I'll fetch 'em off safe for you, or my name's not John Dell!"

They continued to talk in that vein until the boat reached the side of the brig. Then the two friends climbed the ladder and in company with the captain entered the cabin. To Philip's surprise, a dark slender man in the dress of a French gallant rose from one of the bunks; and still more to his surprise, Adair, after a startled pause, inclined his head and observed:

"This is the last place in the world I should have expected to meet the Viscount de Doré."

"And I the Marquis de Florac," was the courteous reply.

"So you two are acquainted, eh?" observed Captain Dell.

"We have seen something of each other

at the court of France," replied Adair. "The viscount, I believe, has the honor of being one of His Majesty's most trusted servants."

The other made a sign of assent and seated himself again upon the bunk; and Philip, who had long since learned to read his companion's face, knew that there was very little love between the two men. Later he heard Captain Dell explain to Adair that the viscount had been shipwrecked while on his way from France to Guadeloupe with dispatches for the governor-general of the island. Off Trinidad the captain had taken him from a Portuguese vessel that had rescued a number of the survivors and, for a sum of money, had agreed to land the viscount at Gaudeloupe or one of the islands within the jurisdiction of the governor-general.

In a short time the Martha Dell was on her way northward, and to Philip, lying with partly closed eyes on one of the bunks, it seemed that each league the vessel made brought him a little closer to a tremendous crisis in his life. What the captain had said concerning his family left no doubt in his

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mind of the bold intentions of the man. But could Captain Dell hope to take them off the island, from under the nose of the watchful Saint-Marly, without endangering their lives?

The following day the Martha Dell passed the northern end of the lofty island of Dominica and late the same afternoon cast anchor off the eastern coast of Marie Galante.

Under the light of the cabin lamp that evening Captain Dell outlined his plan. Besides Philip and Adair and the captain, there were present the Viscount de Doré, David Oakley, the mate, and a slim, wiry seaman named Boole. Except for the viscount, who lay back at his ease upon his bunk, they were seated on benches round the small square table. Captain Dell began with characteristic abruptness.

"I have gone ahead with arrangements," he said, addressing Adair. "The family of the boy are doubtless at Grand Bourg, the only village, yonder on the southwest coast. Boole knows the place, having spent a year there. I propose therefore that he go ashore at once with a message from the lad to his father,

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instructing him to be at a given point along the shore at a certain hour. Oakley has a picked body of men to man two of our boats—men who are used to handling firearms,” he added. “For when I plan a thing I like it to succeed. There are soldiers at the village, and they have their duties to perform. Now what think you of it?”

“It is excellent!” exclaimed Adair.

“That is good. Now lad,” continued the captain, reaching beneath his bunk and drawing forth writing materials, “let us see what you can do with these.”

With the help of Boole, Philip drew a rough plan of the little island and marked a cross at the mouth of a small stream perhaps half a league along the shore to the east of the village. “Aye, that is a good place,” said the captain. Then in a hand that trembled a little at first Philip wrote a detailed message on the back of the paper.

Adair read it, made a correction or two in the interest of clearness and then passed it to Boole, saying, “You cannot mistake the man. He is short and heavy-set, with gray



hair and quiet blue eyes. Look well at the face of the lad here, and 'twill help you. And remember the name, Jean La Fere."

A few minutes later the seaman left, and presently they heard the splash of oars.

With a swift glance at Philip, Adair reached for his throat and unclasped the leather bag, which he opened upon the table. Spreading out the contents before the curious eyes of the others, he lifted the largest pearl and passed it to Captain Dell.

"I know not how much this may be worth," he said, "possibly a very great deal. At any rate, permit us to offer it to you as a token of our very deep gratitude."

The captain held the pearl up to the light; then with a slight smile he passed it back to Adair. "A beauty it is and no doubt; but I cannot take it. What I do for you I do solely because my conscience tells me it is right."

Adair's face showed his disappointment; but he merely said, "I respect your feelings of delicacy," and began to restore the contents of the pouch.

"I see you have the tip of a plume there,"

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continued the captain. "I am by nature a bit curious. May I ask why you have it?"

Adair held the plume above the table so that all might see it. "This plume," he replied proudly, "is the one that Henry IV, King of France, wore upon his casque. It is a relic of my family, and I treasure it as I treasure my life."

Philip observed that the Viscount de Doré had risen to a sitting posture on his bunk and was staring with much evident interest at the plume; but the circumstance appeared of no particular importance at the time, and he soon forgot it.

The seaman, Boole, did not return that night, but the following morning the two companions saw him at his duties with the rest of the crew; and at breakfast the captain explained to them that the man had met with entire success. He had not only delivered the message, but had also been able to talk with Philip's father. The family were well, said Boole, and the father showed great eagerness to co-operate in the plan of rescue, promising to be at the river mouth that evening as close to nine o'clock as possible.

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"It seems best that I tell you," Captain Dell added to Adair, "that your countryman, the viscount, has had the hardihood to protest to me against this venture, even going so far as to demand that I set him ashore at once. Naturally I refused."

Adair smiled. "The viscount is a man of spirit—a man whom I admire in many ways, albeit we are of opposite faiths. He will bear watching."

"Aye, and he shall have it!" replied the captain grimly.

The day dragged out with almost unbearable slowness. During the morning Philip and Adair discussed the details of the plan with Captain Dell and Oakley. It seemed unlikely that anything would go amiss, and yet Philip was desperately anxious. Noon passed, and he and Adair slept under an awning on deck until the sun had sunk behind the island.

"Oh, if we only were sure they could get clear of the village without rousing the suspicion of Saint-Marly!" exclaimed Philip.

"Yes, if we were only sure of a number of things," replied Adair. "I cannot conceal the

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fact that I, too, am anxious. As I look back on the past year it seems as if you and I had spent the greater part of our time in trying to escape from someone and in aiding others to escape. And now at this moment I am more worried, more deeply anxious than I was at Bellefontaine, or at Aigues-Mortes, or when we ran afoul of Black Pierre. Ah, well, we shall do our best. Courage, lad!" And with a smile he touched his throat.

Twilight was closing in when Captain Dell ordered the boats lowered. Each was manned by six rowers and well supplied with muskets and cutlasses. In the first, by the captain's order, Philip took his place on the stern seat beside Adair and Oakley, a brawny giant with great hairy arms and a massive, protruding underjaw. In the stern of the second boat were Captain Dell, Boole and the Viscount de Doré. At the last moment the captain had yielded to the viscount's plea, promising to put him ashore as soon as the La Fere family were safely aboard.

The captain's boat set a course for the southern end of the island, and Oakley fol-



lowed close upon its wake. Overhead the sky was spangled with a multitude of stars that shone with increasing brightness; and off to the east a misshapen, waning moon half-way up in the heavens was breaking through a thin streak of cloud. Balmy though the evening was, Philip shivered. Adair was unnaturally silent, replying only in monosyllables to the infrequent questions of the mate.

An hour and a half of steady rowing brought them to the river mouth indicated on the map. A broad, smooth beach as white as snow in the moonlight sloped gently toward a kind of natural terrace covered with tall, waving grass and bushes. Beyond rose steep, heavily wooded bluffs, black and grim-looking against the star-filled sky. The boats crossed the mouth of the river, and Captain Dell, Oakley and Philip and Adair landed upon the white beach.

"We are a little early," observed the captain. Then turning toward the boats, "Out with you upon the shore, lads, and stretch your legs. And you, sir," he added to the

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viscount, "may do the same, if you will pledge your word of honor not to try to escape."

"I pledge you my word," replied the courtier, bowing.

The men from the Martha Dell formed in little groups, striding back and forth upon the glistening sands, their muskets and cutlasses shining in the moonlight; but Philip noticed that Boole and two or three others were careful not to move far from the viscount. The captain, too, with a hand resting on one of the pistols that protruded from his belt, glanced from time to time at the courtier as if regretting that he had allowed the man so much freedom.

"You need have no misgivings, captain, regarding the viscount," observed Adair. "He has given you his word; he will not break it."

"Hm," replied the captain, "for his own good I hope he makes no trouble."

Half an hour passed with no sound save the waves and the low voices of the men. Philip and Adair, each armed with a cutlass and a pistol, walked side by side up and down the beach, growing more anxious, more apprehensive with each passing minute.

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Suddenly a distant shout arose in the direction of the village; it was followed by another and another, each a little louder than the preceding one. With one accord Philip and Adair ran toward the terrace, where they were joined by the captain and Oakley.

"Egad!" exclaimed Captain Dell. "Something's gone amiss. Those were men's voices. Tarnation—"

The harsh rattle of leaves and undergrowth sounded close at hand, and the next instant two white-clad figures burst forth from the thicket. Philip dropped his cutlass and sprang forward, crying, "Mother! Germaine!"

He had barely clasped them in his arms, when a tongue of yellow flame leaped out from the thicket a score of yards to their left and the air trembled with the report of a musket. "The soldiers!" gasped Germaine. "Oh, where is father!"

"To the boats!" cried Captain Dell, and forming a half circle round the women, the men moved quickly in the direction of the main party.

Just as they reached the edge of the water,

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a third figure burst from the thicket, and with a thrill of joy Philip recognized the burly form and gray hair of his father. The old man was only a little more than halfway across the stretch of sand, when three bright flashes illumined the edge of the thicket, and a loud roar shook the air. With a gasp of horror Philip saw his father spin sidewise and then pitch forward face downward. At the same instant he saw Adair and the mate rush forward and lift him in their arms.

"Fire!" yelled Captain Dell as fresh flashes leaped out all along the thicket.

In the midst of the din Adair and Oakley carried Jean La Fere, still conscious but with a bad wound in the leg, to the river mouth and lifted him into one of the boats, where Germaine and her mother were crouching.

Except for Boole, who was kneeling beside the Viscount de Doré near the boats, the men from the brig were spread out in a wide half circle, each man lying prone upon the sand, waiting for a flash at which to discharge his piece. Leaving Philip with his family, Adair

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crept forward to where Captain Dell was crouching near the middle of the half circle.

"Egad!" muttered the captain. "I don't dare put off in the boats."

"This will not do!" exclaimed Adair. "Captain, we must rush the thicket!"

Captain Dell was about to reply, when a voice rose from the direction of the terrace.

"What is it they want?" demanded the captain.

"They want to parley," replied Adair.

"A parley, eh? All right. Tell them we are willing. Hold your fire, men!" he shouted.

Adair cupped his hands round his mouth and called out that they would assent to a truce.

A few moments later an unarmed man advanced from the shadows and walked slowly toward the water. Adair and the captain moved forward to meet him, leaving their weapons behind them in the sand.

The man delivered his message in a few words. "My commanding officer," he said, "bids me charge you in the name of His Sovereign Majesty, King of France, to deliver up the three prisoners whom you now hold.



He bids me bring to your attention that you are outnumbered and in a disadvantageous position. He holds no ill will against you and, once you have surrendered the prisoners, will permit you to depart in safety."

"Tell your commanding officer—" began the captain angrily, but Adair caught his arm and whispered a few words in his ear. Then—

"What is the name of your commanding officer?" he said to the messenger.

"Nicolas Saint-Marly, King's lieutenant."

Adair drew the captain aside, and for a few minutes the two conversed in earnest whispers.

Then Adair strode to the waiting messenger. "Tell your commanding officer," he said in a ringing voice, "that we are unable to comply with his request. Tell him, furthermore, that we in no way desire to risk the lives of the two women by resuming hostilities. Therefore, in the name of humanity and justice, I bid you say to him that I, Raoul Adair de Gautier, Marquis de Florac de la Tour de Bosc, do challenge him to single combat here and now upon these white sands—the outcome of this combat to decide



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whether the prisoners remain with us or return to him. Tell him that the Viscount de Doré, who is well known to him and will doubtless serve as one of his seconds, is with the boats yonder, and that before that favorite of His Majesty the King I shall brand your officer as a coward if he refuse!"

The messenger walked with quick steps toward the terrace. At the end of five minutes he returned, and held forth a narrow length of cloth evidently torn from the lining of a uniform.

"My commanding officer," he said gravely, "has the honor of sending you the length of his sword."

"For that I am deeply grateful to him," replied Adair—while Captain Dell, hardly able to comprehend the courtesy and formality of the whole affair, regarded him with frowning brows and puzzled eyes.



Chapter Ten

AN EMISSARY FROM THE KING

IT WAS several minutes before Philip learned what had taken place between Adair and the messenger from Saint-Marly. While helping his mother and Germaine to care for the wounded father, he was aware that the firing on both sides had ceased, and that representatives of the two forces had met out there on the beach, but he did not know that one of them was Adair; indeed the boy had temporarily forgotten his friend. He was startled therefore when he heard the voice of Adair behind him, addressing the Viscount de Doré:

"I am about to fight a duel with Nicolas Saint-Marly, the outcome of which will settle this dispute in which we are at present engaged. I have ventured to suggest that you might be willing to act as one of his seconds."

"I shall be pleased to act as his second," replied the viscount.

"I am obliged to you," said Adair, and



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then seeing Philip staring at him, he called the boy to his side.

Briefly he explained what had happened, concluding, "And now, Philip, if your father can spare you, I shall want you again as my second."

"Oh, Adair! And we must risk everything on this combat?"

"It is the only happy solution," was the grave reply. "But do not fear, lad. I was never more sure of myself. And," he added with a smile, "the ground we shall fight on will have no slippery places. The one thing that concerns me is to procure a blade."

Five minutes later Adair, with Philip and Captain Dell as his seconds, walked down the beach to meet Saint-Marly, who with three of his party had advanced from the thicket. The matter of a sword for Adair was soon settled; the Viscount de Doré offered his own, which happened to be of a length almost equal to the lieutenant's. Philip and the captain then conferred with the viscount and one of Saint-Marly's officers who was to act as his other second. Having

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agreed on the choice of ground, they drew back, and the two combatants advanced.

Standing beside the captain, Philip could see the flashing blades of Adair and Saint-Marly as the two men circled round each other on the firm sand. Beyond them stood the viscount and the other second close together and as silent as shadows. To the west, perhaps forty paces from the combatants, were gathered the soldiers in a black mass, their arms and accoutrements shining in the pale light. At an equal distance, forming a smaller, more compact group in front of the two boats, stood the men from the Martha Dell. And off to the east, halfway up in the sky, rode the distorted, waning moon pouring its silver down upon the beach.

Adair parried the first thrust of his adversary, and the air rang with the blow. He thrust and missed, then drew back to save himself. Round and round the two men moved, feinting, thrusting, leaping swiftly aside. Adair's long weeks of idleness with the sword had robbed him of some of the finesse he had possessed, but his wrist was



Saint-Marly sought to save himself by a leap to the left.



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still strong, his eyes keen, his body more hardened and supple than ever before—and he was fighting, not only for his life, but for the lives of three beings whom he had learned to love.

For the first ten minutes he fought with great caution, being content to wait for a false move on the part of his larger opponent. Then suddenly changing his tactics, he began to press the officer, forcing him to his utmost to evade the point of his sword. Now toward the throat, now toward the abdomen the blade flashed outward, until Saint-Marly baffled by the speed of the attack, lowered his guard and then sought to save himself by a leap to the left. Like a bolt of lightning, Adair's blade shot outward, burying itself between the throat and the right shoulder, and with a short, gurgling cry Saint-Marly crumbled to the sand.

Both pairs of seconds were rushing forward, when to his horror Philip saw the Viscount de Doré halt and, deliberately drawing his pistol, raise it at arm's length. For an instant Philip thought the man was aiming

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at Adair; then turning suddenly, he had a glimpse of a kneeling figure a few paces behind him, a black bandage over one eye, a musket raised and pointed at the motionless form of Adair. The next second the viscount's pistol spat forth a tongue of flame, and Philip saw the man with the bandage topple over backward, quiver, then relax, his face upturned in the moonlight.

"Egad!" cried Captain Dell. "That is shooting!"

Adair stretched forth his hand to the viscount. "I owe you my life," he said simply. "I am deeply touched. I can say no more."

"Assassination is more than I can countenance," replied the viscount, bending over the prostrate Saint-Marly.

The lieutenant was evidently suffering great pain. As the viscount and the other second lifted him to a sitting posture, he opened his eyes and looked full at Adair. "You—have had—your way," he murmured. Then his eyelids fluttered, and he slumped in the arms of his seconds.

At a word from the captain, the sailors

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from the Martha Dell manned the boats and prepared to push off; but Adair and Philip lingered beside the wounded officer while a surgeon from the detachment cared for his injury.

As Philip gazed down upon Saint-Marly's white face and limp body he felt a sense of awe at the justice that had been meted out. Try as he would, he could not summon much pity for the man. He remembered how Saint-Marly had tricked Adair in their first combat and how he had deliberately lunged with his blade at Adair's throat when the Huguenot was on his knees, disarmed and helpless. He remembered Saint-Marly's bitter words, his scornful laughter in the house on the waterfront at Marseilles. He remembered all the cruelties his family had undergone at the hands of the lieutenant and his men. He glanced at Adair. There was compassion in the face of the young noble, but he uttered no word; he merely remained close to the surgeon, ready to render such assistance as might be needed.

At last Saint-Marly opened his eyes again.



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Catching sight of Adair as if for the first time, he struggled to rise. His mouth twisted in a snarl of hatred, and his hands clawed at his sword belt. Then suddenly he relaxed—so suddenly, indeed, that the surgeon bent quickly over him, his face almost touching the face of the lieutenant.

For perhaps a full minute no one spoke. Then the surgeon lifted his head and passed the back of his hand across his mouth. "Gentlemen," he said, "I can do no more for him. He is dead."

Adair lowered his head and turned away. "Come," he whispered to Philip, "we can be of no service here." And with a bow to the Viscount de Doré he walked toward the boats.

"You made short work of him, my friend," observed the captain, when the boats were under way. "And right glad I am of it! Had the fracas gone on, most of us likely enough would be lying face upward in the moonlight, like yonder fellow with the bandaged eye."

Adair nodded, but made no comment.

It was past midnight when the party reached the Martha Dell. The ship's surgeon

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at once took charge of Jean La Fere and, to the relief of Philip and the others, said there was no need of amputating the leg. The captain insisted that the old man share the cabin with him; and then he personally saw to it that Germaine and her mother were provided with suitable quarters.

Early the following morning, the brig weighed anchor and, with a fresh wind astern, moved northward toward the far-off colonies. The voyage proved in no way eventful, but during the long, monotonous weeks Philip was happier than he had ever been before. The great crisis in his life had passed; his father was mending rapidly; and although both Germaine and her mother still showed the effects of worry, hardship and privation, a look of hope, of peace, had come into their faces, as if each had caught a glimpse of the new life that lay ahead of them.

Adair, too, had changed; he was more pre-occupied, almost sad, being content to sit for long periods, silently gazing off to the east. One day, when Philip surprised his friend at his dreaming, Adair said, "Do you



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realize, Philip, that we shall in all likelihood never see France again? Banished, exiled, driven from a land whose laws we sought to obey, whose fair fields and green hills we loved! For myself I can bear it, but my heart bleeds when I think of the thousands of our faith who suffer."

"Perhaps," replied Philip doubtfully, "we shall find the colonies much to our liking."

"Ah, lad," was the reply, "there can be no adequate substitute for one's native land. But we must not let that thought spoil our lives. While we remain on foreign soil we must give to it the best there is in us. O Navarre!" he added in a burst of emotion. "You alone of all the French monarchs understood the justice and the wisdom of tolerance!"

On a cold, foggy morning in December the Martha Dell entered New York harbor; and three days later—Jean La Fere being now recovered from his wound—the fugitives took their leave of Captain Dell and his men who had treated them with so much kindness.

The pearls that Adair and Philip had found

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proved to be of no extraordinary quality, but the money they brought, from a jeweler near Maiden Lane, was sufficient to enable the family to make a fresh start in life. Jean La Fere found remunerative employment in a cooperage near Wall Street. Philip worked with his father for a while and then, at the urgency of the marquis, entered the Latin school recently established by a Scotchman named Jamison. Adair himself worked during the day in a mercantile house, employing his spare hours in seeking a mastery of the knowledge of law. As he pointed out to Philip, there seemed to be something about the New World that stimulated one's ambition to better his station in life.

At the end of a year the La Fere family—although they often sighed for their native France—were more prosperous than they could ever have hoped to be across the water. Jean La Fere soon left the cooperage and set up a small hand loom in his own home. The skill of the old weaver attracted wide notice, and it was not long before he had to hire larger quarters. Nor were his

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wife and daughter idle; their dextrous fingers were busy for long hours each day making lace—and the product of their labors was of a fineness and pattern that found a great demand with the wealthy Dutch and English families of the city. The La Feres were in every way typical of the great mass of French emigrés. Wherever they went—to England, to Holland, to the Palatinate or to the New World—the Huguenots carried with them their skill and the secrets of their trades; and industries that formerly had existed only in France began to spring up in competition with that country. And all this because of the short-sighted policy of a bigoted king!

By the middle of the following year the fortunes of the family were on a sure foundation, and Philip was beginning to think of one day entering Harvard College. The thought was in his mind, one evening, when he was sitting on a bench in the garden behind the little house near Governor's Garden, which the La Feres occupied; a book was spread out on his knees, and his head was thrown back in an attitude of pleasant con-

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temptation. He gave a slight start at the sound of footsteps behind him; then he smiled as Adair seated himself beside him on the bench.

"Philip," said the marquis abruptly, "I have news to tell—news that I hope may please you."

Philip waited expectantly, noting with wonder the animation in his friend's face, the unusual sparkle in his eyes. Adair put his arm round the boy's shoulders.

"You cannot guess, Philip?"

"No," said Philip, puzzled.

Adair's lips parted over his fine teeth. "I have just come from your father," he said, trying hard to make his voice sound matter-of-fact. "We have had a long talk—a talk that makes me the happiest of men. Philip, my friend, I love your sister. I have loved her, I think, ever since the day I saw her for the first time, at Bellefontaine. Oh, Philip, I love her with all my heart, all my soul! And, lad, we are to be betrothed—"

"Oh, Adair!" cried Philip, suddenly catching his friend's hand. "Is it true? Is it really true? I—I had hoped—I had—"

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"You are not displeased then?"

"Displeased? How can you say it! We shall be together always! We shall be—"

"Brothers!" added Adair, smiling.

And then both rose at the sound of a voice behind them. Germaine was coming into the garden, and there was added color in her cheeks, and joy shone in her dark eyes.

It was not more than a week later that visitors called one evening at the little house. They were two Frenchmen dressed after the fashion of the court of Louis, and they asked to see Adair. He and Philip were upstairs at their studies, when Germaine knocked at the door and announced the visitors.

As the two men entered, Adair and Philip got quickly to their feet in surprise, recognizing one of the two as the Viscount de Doré.

"It seems we are destined to meet in strange places," said the viscount with a bow to Adair. "This," he added, indicating his companion, "is the Chevalier de Villesavoye, special emissary of His Majesty,"

Adair inclined his head to acknowledge the bow of the chevalier.



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After a few preliminary words the chevalier said: "I am here on particular business concerning His Majesty." Then with a glance toward the viscount, "His Majesty has learned of a treasured relic which you possess—I refer specifically to the tip of the white plume, which the gallant monarch Henry IV wore upon his casque. His Majesty feels that so rich a legacy should have a place only at the court of France, where it may receive proper homage. Therefore he bids me inform you he would consider it a favor were you to part with it."

He paused, and Adair inquired, "A favor great enough to induce His Majesty to restore to me my lands, even his good will?"

"There can be no doubt of that," replied the chevalier.

Philip, watching his friend's face, saw a sudden glint come into his dark eyes, and a thrill swept through the boy as Adair replied:

"You may inform His Majesty that the white plume of Navarre—with the qualities it stands for—is more dear to me even than my poor lands or the good will of my



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sovereign! I cannot part with it. Were the King here before me now, in this country where a man is judged, not by his faith, but by his industry and uprightness of character, I should say to him: 'You call yourself Louis the Great. You call yourself the Sun King. Yet I say to you, for your bigotry, which has caused so much suffering among the best of your loyal subjects, and which has struck so cruel a blow at the country for whose welfare you are responsible, you have committed a sin and an error which will rest forever as an ugly blot upon the history of France!'

"Gentlemen, you have my answer. For your sake, my dear viscount, to whom I shall never forget that I owe my life, I regret that it must be unfavorable."

The two courtiers sat as if stunned; then they rose and with curt bows took their departure.

And as the door closed behind them, Philip rushed forward and caught Adair in his arms.



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find it in the road to
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